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Murder in Brighton

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Labour follows Tories' lead by focusing on traditional values

The fight for the family

Ewen MacAskill and Michael White

TONY Blair will today unveil Labour's 10-point Contract for Britain with a number of no-frills promises to undo the errors of 18 years of Conservative rule by creating 250,000 new jobs, reforming education and the welfare state — without raising income tax rates.

Labour's 16,000-word manifesto will promise active government to help families to flourish, provide curfews on young troublemakers and eventually hand over management of the National Lottery to a non-profit body.

But Mr Blair will portray his pledges as a fully-costed, no-gimmicks alternative to the last-minute surprise which John Major's tax breaks for married couples sprang on voters when he unveiled the Conservatives' own manifesto yesterday.

Mr Blair will be fighting Mr Major on similar middle ground this morning when he makes welfare reform and education the main priorities of a Labour government.

The Labour leader will present a 10-point plan: □ Increase the share of national income spent on education.

□ No increase in basic and top rates of income tax.

□ Provision of stable economic growth with low inflation and promotion of a "dynamic and competitive" business sector

□ Getting 250,000 jobless young people off the dole and into employment or training schemes.

□ A rebuilt National Health Service, reducing the amounts spent on bureaucracy and administration and increasing spending on patient care.

□ A pledge to be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime", halving the time it takes to get persistent young offenders brought to court.

□ Building strong families and communities and laying down the foundations of a modern welfare state in pensions and community care.

□ Safeguarding the environment and developing an integrated transport policy to combat congestion and pollution.

□ A commitment to "clean up politics" through the de-centralisation of political power throughout the UK and making the funding of political parties on a properly accountable basis.

□ To give Britain leadership in the European Union.

Labour officials are making a virtue of the lack of surprises in today's document, and proclaiming that the promises have been carefully worked out and costed.

But in a tit-for-tat fight over taxation and spending the Tories will today renew their charges that Labour spokesmen have made £30 billion worth of hidden spending pledges which will require tax rises in Gordon Brown's promised July budget. Labour yesterday accused Mr Major of £13 billion of extra expenditure in his manifesto.

Mr Blair will raise a number of new issues to be fleshed out during the campaign, such as Lottery reform. He is determined that the proceeds are better spent, with Camelot likely to face tougher regulation and eventual replacement by a non-profit body.

Labour's manifesto will also see battle fully engaged with the Conservatives over which is the party of the family. It will say: "We will uphold family life as the most secure means of bringing up our children. Families are the core of our society. They should teach right from wrong. They should be the first defence against anti-social behaviour."

But the party has failed to find a way of filling the black hole of funding long-term care for the elderly. In an echo of past compromises, today's manifesto kicks the problem out to review by a Royal Commission.

Divisions over pension reform emerged at the party conference last October, when the former Labour minister, Barbara Castle, fought a rear-guard action in defence of Serps, the state-run occupational pension scheme which Tory reforms would replace by a privatised personal "basic pension-plus."

The manifesto offers no answer: "We will set up a review of the central areas of insecurity for elderly people: all aspects of the basic pension and its value, second pensions including Serps and community care."

● A new opinion poll today shows Labour opening up a 27-point lead over the Tories. MORI's poll in today's Times found 55 per cent backed Labour, 5 per cent up on one week ago, with the Tories down one to 28 per cent. The Liberal Democrats, who stood at 14 per cent last week, were back down to 11 per cent.

Tony Blair seen at Labour's Millbank HQ yesterday, and (left) the text of his contract with the electorate

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Positive but impatient, ruthless but impulsive — it's Tony Blair

Tony Blair took a seat in his back garden in Islington two weeks ago and composed his contract with the British people. Last night graphologist Diane Simpson told Alex Bellos what Mr Blair's hand reveals about the man who would be prime minister.

ON THE whole his handwriting is very positive. It shows him to be a balanced person. I test many people for jobs in the banking profession and he would do well.

Presentation is A1. He is goal-minded but not obsessively so. He personalises whatever he does — he *is* what he does. His motivational drive is above average but doesn't equal the vast amounts of energy he is currently generating — somewhat like a coiled spring.

An Achilles heel? He will act on impulse and therefore can be provoked. Additionally, he finds difficulty in closing options. He is not a natural controller, but rather someone who can and will control when necessary.

However blasé he may appear, he is very much concentrating on the matter in hand. He obviously doesn't think it's plain sailing. He is taking nothing for granted.

His writing displays an independence of action. It indicates that although he can work in a team, he doesn't need team approval. He is not afraid to disagree with the team. There is a streak of independence there.

His negative qualities are that he tends to exaggerate. He is impatient. There has to be forward movement at all cost.

I would say he is probably as critical of himself as he is of other people. His critical faculties are very sharp. But he is not without a streak of ruthlessness.

I don't think he is stressed. Rather, he's excited. Major wind-ups will include being prevented from communicating as he sees fit and having to back down from confrontation against his judgment.

The Election, our four-page section with the best reports, the most comprehensive analysis and the best commentators.

"Ideally, for this election, Peter Snow would have a sleazeometer, featuring, perhaps a black stockinged leg swinging towards a hand containing a brown envelope."
Mark Lawson on television's hi-tech election
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"A Labour gaffe, a mega-gaffe, that's what John Major prays for."
Michael White on a Prime Minister in his favourite role, the plucky underdog
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SS woman faces trial

Ian Traynor in Bonn

IN WHAT may be Germany's last Nazi war crimes trial, an east German woman and former Nazi camp guard, aged 79, is expected to face prosecution for the murder of a young girl in a concentration camp a month before the capitulation of the Third Reich.

State prosecutors in the town of Meiningen, in the eastern state of Thuringia, have issued an indictment for murder against the former SS guard, after a lengthy investigation by Germany's main Nazi-hunting unit based in Ludwigsburg in the south. Court officials said no trial date had yet been set.

The woman served 10 years of a life sentence in Poland in the immediate post-war years after a Cracow court found her guilty of war crimes.

As a result of German unification, Nazi-hunters have gained access to secret files in former communist east Germany, leading to witnesses being located abroad, and this case being built.

The charge-sheet says the accused, known only as Luise D., murdered the girl in front of witnesses at the Malchow camp — a satellite of Ravensbrück — outside Berlin at the end of March 1945. The mainly female inmates were used as slave labour in a nearby munitions factory.

In the final weeks of the war, the concentration camps were being emptied as the Allies closed in, and the inmates were sent on "death marches". Luise D., a guard at Malchow who had previously worked at the Auschwitz

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Holocaust suit, page 5

Mice at play in moral maze

Tim Radford
Science Editor

WHEN IT comes to education, privilege pays off. Laboratory mice who are given toys, more space and tastier food develop 15 per cent more brain cells than those from "poor" homes. The discovery — reported by Californian scientists in Nature today — is likely to trigger a new round of the nature versus nurture debate.

Fred Gage and colleagues at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies at La Jolla took mice at 21 days old and brought them up in either "ordinary" or "enriched" environments for 40 days. They then counted the difference in neuron or nerve cell growth in a part of the brain linked with learning and memory called the hippocampus.

The differences were dramatic. On average, the middle-class mice with the stimulating intellectual life ended up with 40,000 more neurons than the poor ones. The mice were also tested in mazes: the rich ones did better than the poor ones.

The results will provide ammunition for those who think that differences in performance at school have to do with background as much as heredity.

British neuroscientists yesterday were delighted with the message of the middle-class mice. Steven Rose, of the Open University, warned that there were dangers in comparing laboratory animals with humans. "But even so there are parallels with human brain development."

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Labour

Twins Christopher Langford (left) and Anthony (far right); and an Old Bailey artist's picture yesterday of David Dillon, who is accused of murdering the pair and dumping their bodies in the Regent's Canal

ILLUSTRATION: SIAN FRANCIS

Police tipped off over twins murder

Anonymous note was received a month before bodies found in canal, writes Duncan Campbell

POLICE were sent an anonymous note tipping them off about the double murder of twins a month before their bodies were found in a London canal, a court heard yesterday.

The man who had allegedly beaten the twins to death later told a friend he had taken their bodies to the canal in a shopping trolley, an Old Bailey jury heard yesterday.

The bodies of the twins, Christopher and Anthony Langford, aged 38, from Bedfordshire, were found in March and April last year in the Regent's Canal in Islington, north London.

Christopher's body was found on March 26 and, although he had suffered a fractured skull, ribs and leg, it was thought his death might have been the result of an accident.

But when his brother Anthony's body was found on April 8, wrapped in a carpet and bound with electric wire, police launched a double murder inquiry. Anthony had suffered a fractured skull, rib and jaw and lacerations to the head.

The twins and the man accused of their murder, David Dillon, aged 38, were "street people", said Timothy Langdale QC, prosecuting. They lived rough and drank heavily.

David Dillon, originally from Dublin, is pleading not guilty to murdering the twins between February and April last year.

The twins left their homes in 1991 and came to London. They slept rough, in hostels or in the homes of friends. It was not unusual for them to fall out and they sometimes ended up fighting each other.

On February 27, an anonymous letter was received at Islington police station claiming that the twins had been murdered at the one-bedroom council flat where Dillon lived in Copenhagen Street, Islington.

Police searched the flat but found no blood, although they noted there was a smell of fresh paint and that the floor tiles were splattered with paint.

On April 8, after the bodies had surfaced, another member of the local drinking community, Lawrence Walsh, had gone to the police station and told officers that Dillon had confessed to the murders.

Mr Walsh claimed that Dillon told him he had kept the bodies in his flat for a couple of days and had dropped a cartwheel on the head of one of the twins.

He said he had "turned the twins over and dumped them in the canal", using a shopping trolley.

On one occasion, according to the alleged confession, two women and a man had visited the flat when the bodies were still there.

There was no apparent motive for the killings and there were no witnesses, said Mr Langdale. It was not possible to say exactly when they had happened.

But the Crown would show, he said, that four factors pointed to the accused's guilt: his confession to Mr Walsh; the fact that he had cleaned and redecorated his flat around the time of the murders; scientific evidence of blood and a hair that linked at least one of the twins to his flat; and the fact that he had demonstrably lied to the police when later questioned about whether his flat had ever had floor tiles.

Some of the alleged confession to Mr Walsh could not be true, said Mr Langdale, because Dillon said he had cut off the head and hands of one twin when clearly he had not.

But Dillon had told another man: "don't worry, the twins have gone for a long swim" before the bodies had been found, said Mr Langdale.

How would he know they would be found in the water, he asked the jury.

The trial, which is likely to last two weeks, continues.

Magpies' shares a steal at 135p

Ian King

NEWCASTLE United made a confident debut on the stock market yesterday. The shares opened at a premium when trading kicked off, valuing the club at just over £200 million.

The shares, offered to investors at 135p each, closed at 140p, making the Magpies the second most valuable floated football club after Manchester United. The price values the stake held by Cameron Hall Developments, the company owned by Newcastle's millionaire chairman, Sir John Hall, at some £114 million.

The issue, which was oversubscribed by roughly seven times, was seen in some quarters as proof that the City — despite heavy markdowns of some football stocks earlier this year — is still keen on such shares. Some 8 million changed hands yesterday.

But the manner of the flotation has been attacked in recent weeks by Newcastle fans, who were angry that only a handful of season ticket holders successfully applied for shares, while City institutions picked up some 85 per cent of those available.

Demand from season ticket holders was so strong that Newcastle was unable to give any of the shares earmarked under the "retail offer" to the general public. About 14,000 supporters had to wait for trading to start before they could invest.

Newcastle, which has raised nearly £50 million from the issue, has said it will invest the proceeds to repay borrowings, build new training and youth facilities and provide manager Kenny Dalglish with a war chest to buy new players.

Elsewhere, Bolton Wanderers, runaway leaders of the Nationwide First Division, confirmed that the club will come to market at the end of the month, after its £22 million takeover yesterday by Mosaic Investments.

Shares of Mosaic, which will change its name to Burnden Leisure, were suspended at 51½p last month when news of the deal emerged.

Bolton, one of the 12 clubs which founded the Football League in 1888, is almost certain to be promoted to the Premier League at the end of the season, making it eligible for a slice of the highly lucrative pay-per-view market which is expected to emerge in the next few years.

However, although no pay-per-view proceeds have been factored into the proposed terms of the deal, Mosaic chairman David Williams insisted he was not buying the club on the cheap.

He said Bolton would gain access to Mosaic's £9 million cash pile, part of which would be spent on new players.

He added: "This is a great deal for both sides, with a valuation based on that of Bolton's new stadium, and everyone feels comfortable with it."

Premier League Derby County paved the way for a possible flotation, announcing plans to tap shareholders for £15 million this summer.

Newcastle United's ground and (below) the club's millionaire chairman Sir John Hall

Company	Market value (£ millions)
Manchester United	418
Newcastle United	200
Chelsea Village	195
Tottenham Hotspur	107
Caspian Group (Leeds United)	100
Celtic	90
Sunderland	45
Sheffield United	34
Loftus Road (Queen's Park Rangers)	26
West Bromwich Albion	15
Millwall Holdings (shares suspended)	14
Charlton Athletic	13
Preston North End	11
Southampton Leisure (Southampton)	8
Birmingham City	7

Expected this year: Aston Villa, Bolton Wanderers, Hearts, Leicester City, Nottingham Forest.
Expected in next few years: Coventry City, Sheffield Wednesday, Derby County.

Nazi camp guard faces trial in Germany

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witz, Majdanek, and Plaszow concentration camps, was allegedly put in charge of the camp's "evacuation".

She was organising one such march when a young girl prisoner pleaded not to be separated from her mother. The identity of the girl is not known.

"The accused beat the girl with a rubber truncheon and then kicked and trampled the prostrate girl with her boots until she died. Her entrails are said to have spilled from her stomach," the charge-sheet states.

It adds that former inmates who emigrated and are still living in Belgium and the United States say they witnessed the alleged war crime.

"There are plenty of witnesses and we have three who will testify," a Meiningen court official said. "There is much to indicate that this cannot be covered by a statute of limitations."

Murder is not covered by a statute of limitations in Germany, although manslaughter is.

During the cold war there was no extradition treaty between East and West Germany for indicted war criminals. Several female guards at Majdanek, alleged accomplices of Luise D., were tried in Düsseldorf in the 1970s for mass murder. But the case against the accused was dropped because it was known she was in East Germany.

Never mind the creaking plot, feel the wit

First night

Lyn Gardner

Lady Windermere's Fan
Theatre Royal, Haymarket

IN THE current moral climate, it is tempting to see art and life as hand and glove. Few plays fit quite as elegantly as Oscar Wilde's early, velvet-fisted comedy.

"A man who moralises is a hypocrite, and a woman who moralises is invariably plain," says one of the characters in a play that turns cynicism on its head to observe that it is manners not morals that keep society civilised. One assumes that Wilde stands on the side of Lord Darlington who asserts that "good people do a great deal of harm in this world." Certainly ideals turn out to be dangerous indeed for Lady Windermere and her husband. Realities are far better.

In Braham Murray's cut-glass production, originally seen at the Manchester Royal Exchange, Gabrielle Drake leaves the Crossroads Motel far behind to play the mysterious Mrs Erlynne, one of those fallen women with a scandalous past, without which Victorian melodrama would be pale pink rather than scarlet.

"Many a woman has a past, but she has a dozen, and they all fit," says Rosalind Knight's deliciously bitchy Duchess of Berwick, deliberately letting slip to the very young, very innocent and very priggish Lady Windermere that her husband of just two years has given Mrs Erlynne a Curzon Street house and is seen visiting there every day.

Wilde's plot is creakier than a dowager duchess's knees. Audience and cast could easily save themselves 2¼ hours if Lord Windermere would only reveal to his suspicious young wife that the mysterious Mrs Erlynne is her mother, long supposed dead.

But what a lot of inconsequential fun we would miss. Murray's production, performed by a cast who look as if they have spent their entire lives in evening dress, makes a reasonably good case for the play as more than just a string of witty epigrams.

Drake's charismatic Mrs Erlynne is a slinky, sharp operator with a superb dressmaker, who has the misfortune to discover after 20 years of childlessness that she has a maternal heart that can be all-too-easily pierced. In this social outcast from the salon who talks with bitterness of "the horrible laughter of the world", there is more than a hint of the fate that would befall Wilde. "One pays for one's sins, and one pays again and again. All one's life one pays." Drake raises a tear, just as surely as she raises a laugh with her drawling, Princess Margaret, delivery. It is a beautifully judged performance.

There is good work, too, from relative newcomer Rebecca Johnson, as the puritan Lady Windermere.

Sure enough, it is drawing room comedy. But at least it is one that makes you feel that tea and social niceties in this particular salon will never be quite the same again. And there are few plays that nail the private and public faces of hypocrisy quite so well: as Mrs Erlynne says of a prospective parliamentary candidate: "He thinks like a Tory and talks like a radical — so important these days." Why on earth did we laugh so loud?

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Equity threatens to halt casting of shows

Regional theatres face long, dark summer

Dan Glaister on actors' pay dispute

THEATRES around the country face closure in the coming months after Equity told its members not to sign new contracts with subsidised regional repertory companies.

The escalation in the dispute over a claim for a minimum weekly wage of £250 means that theatres affected by the union's action may not be able to cast new shows.

The Equity instruction to its 35,000 members affects over 100 theatres, ranging from well-known institutions such as the Almeida in London and the Crucible in Sheffield, to the Haymarket in Basingstoke and the Swan in Worcester.

Equity general secretary Ian McGarry said: "It will mean increasingly that some repertory theatres won't be able to cast their shows and therefore won't be able to put on performances. We've been trying for two years to tell them that the position was unacceptable. They agree but we're still waiting."

'It will mean increasingly that theatres won't be able to put on performances'

The Theatrical Management Association recently made an improved offer of a rise from the current minimum of £190 per week to £225 per week, to be phased in over two years. The offer was rejected by the union at a meeting two weeks ago.

There is also dispute over a weekly subsistence allowance paid to actors working away from home. Equity is seeking a rise from £56 to £75 per week. The TMA offered a rise of £4 per week.

The TMA said that although its position had not changed, the organisation was optimistic that there would be a resolution to the dispute and that "the door was open" for further negotiations. "We hope it will be sorted out in a matter of weeks," the spokesman said. "We are looking for a date for a face-to-face meeting with Equity."

The two sides are expected to meet within the next two weeks.

Mr McGarry was also optimistic that a negotiated settlement could be reached. "Talks haven't totally broken down. Obviously, having issued an instruction to our members doesn't make a settlement easier. We've done it because of the inability of the managers to come forward with a clear timetable."

It could be some time before the impact of the Equity instruction is noticed. Many of the 104 theatres affected have already cast forthcoming productions, in some cases as far ahead as the autumn.

High unemployment in the profession will not necessarily mean the theatres will have little difficulty in finding actors. The most recent precedent for the action was a strike over pay and conditions for work in television commercials, which received solid support.

Theatres are dependent on casting established names as well as newcomers, and indications are that support for the action is as solid at the top of the profession as at the bottom.

Should the sides fail to reach agreement, one possibility is for Equity to ballot members on terminating existing contracts. This would have a much more immediate effect on the regional theatres.

● Management and staff from the Royal Opera House are to meet at the conciliation service Acas tomorrow in an attempt to resolve a dispute over salaries and touring allowances as the company prepares to leave Covent Garden for two years.

"Both issues have been under negotiation for a while and were coming to a head," said a management spokesman.

Plans for the closure have been plagued by increasingly sour relations between the two sides. After a failure to agree terms, staff represented by the union Bectu have voted to implement the balloting procedure required for industrial action.

The Opera House has cut staff from more than 800 to 550 for the closure period. Of these, 280 members of staff departed through the company's redundancy scheme, half of them voluntarily.

Forty Years On at the Belgrade, Coventry, starring Tony Robinson, 'working for a pittance' PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT WORKMAN

Watermill Theatre in Newbury: 'Something must be done'

Belgrade

'Some already pay, and a few don't want to'

THE Belgrade theatre in Coventry produces on average eight shows a year, as well as receiving eight touring productions. Its current production is a tour of Forty Years On.

Throughout June it participates in the Coventry Arts Alive Festival, bringing independent companies to the venue. The first show to be affected by the dispute would be the opening production of its autumn season, which starts rehearsals in August. The Belgrade pays £275 per week — above the minimum wage demanded by Equity.

Tony Robinson, who is starring in Forty Years On, said: "If you go into rep you do it knowing you are doing it for a pittance. Whenever any manager is told they have to start paying better wages they say: 'Oh no, we can't do that because the industry will have to close'. It's twaddle. What you do is you reorganise your trading. It seems extraordinary that the TMA hasn't come up with an offer that we can talk seriously about.

"We're not in the business of closing theatres down. Most can afford to pay, some already pay, and a few don't want to pay."

Watermill

'The minimum wage would be the final blow'

AN originating theatre that produces 10 productions a year, as well as running a youth theatre and an education programme.

The Watermill theatre in Newbury, Berkshire, receives £60,000 annual funding, £20,000 from Southern Arts and the rest from local authorities. Its current production, Deadwood, is a new play by Alex Jones. The next production, Henry V, has already been cast. The Watermill pays its actors £275 per week, £25 more than the minimum Equity is claiming.

Jill Russell, artistic executive director, said: "Something has to be done about actor's pay but they really have to take into account the current financial situation and the funding crisis we are facing. We're fighting to get reasonable funding. It really would be the final blow and I can't believe they want to close theatres down.

"We are striving to reach the minimum amount but it would threaten our existence if we had to go to it immediately. We all know the claim is right, I'm just sad that it's reached this stage. However I'm optimistic that reason will prevail."

In various ways, the lie has become the standard currency of culture. The cruel truth is that we have lost the right to choose when we want to be disbelieved.
Mark Lawson on the media April Fool

G2 page 7

Young man maimed in fracas gets £1.6m

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

A YOUNG man who was severely brain-damaged when he was attacked after trying to prevent a fight has won a record £1.6 million award from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Martin Leyland, now aged 24, was with friends in Gloucester seeing in the new year early on January 1, 1993, when they were approached by a group of youths, apparently looking for trouble. Martin tried to calm the situation but he was punched and hit his head on the kerb. His assailant, Wayne Mullbern, was convicted of malicious wounding.

Mr Leyland was working as a labourer but had been planning to start a teacher training course. He will require 24-hour care for the rest of his life.

The bulk of the award is for the cost of two full-time carers for what could be 40 years or more, since Mr Leyland has a near normal life expectancy.

His solicitor, Nicola Heales, from the Reading firm Boyes Turner and Burrows, said: "The severity and complexity of the injuries in this case have meant that the care element of the claim has been especially difficult to assess."

Mr Leyland had some physical disabilities as a result of his brain damage, but was not in a wheelchair, she said.

The record award is more than three times as much as he would have received if his injuries had occurred since April 1, 1996, when the Government changed the rules on compensation for crime victims.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme is a no-fault scheme covering anybody who suffers injury through a crime of violence, or in trying to apprehend an offender or prevent an offence. Victims must report the crime to the police and assist in any prosecution, and an award may be refused if the victim was in any way responsible for the incident or has himself been convicted of a serious crime.

The old scheme linked awards to the compensation payable to accident victims in civil court cases, but the new cheaper system lays down a fixed tariff for each type of injury, with a maximum of £500,000 for the most severe cases.

Ms Heales said: "If Martin's claim had arisen to be dealt with under the new tariff system, the award he received would not be sufficient for his needs. That would have been of great concern to his family."

The new scheme was opposed by Labour, the Liberal Democrats, lawyers and former law lords. A coalition of the Law Society and trade unions took the scheme to judicial review in the High Court, where they initially failed.

But the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, suffered one of the most ignominious court defeats of his career when the case went to appeal. The Appeal Court ruled that he had abused his powers in attempting to bypass Parliament and bring in the new scheme under his prerogative powers, despite the fact that Parliament had passed an act making the old scheme statutory in 1988, though the change had never been brought into force.

'The cap on compensation should be abolished'

Mr Howard later won parliamentary approval for a new tariff scheme, though he was forced to make some modifications. The new scheme takes no account of the effects of the injuries on the individual, or of other matters taken into account by the courts, such as the age, sex or occupation of the victim. Nor is any money payable for lost wages or loss of future earning capacity.

Roger Goodier, secretary of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), which fought the new scheme, said: "APIL has put forward a proposal to the Home Secretary that the cap on compensation should be abolished for injuries of maximum severity."

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Rules relaxed on gambling

Lucky break for gaming bosses as curbs on casinos and bingo are eased

As casinos and bingo halls are helped to compete with the National Lottery, critics fear a rise in problem gamblers PHOTOGRAPH: KENNETH SAUNDERS

Stuart Millar on a sweeping shake-up

THE first of a series of changes to Britain's gaming industry come into force today, paving the way for the most significant shake-up of gambling since the launch of the National Lottery.

Tough licensing and membership restrictions will be lifted on the 117 casinos in England and Wales, allowing them to provide alcohol after midnight and reduce the cooling-off period before new members can gamble from 48 hours to 24.

The changes represent a response to pressures on the industry, especially the impact of the National Lottery and competition from overseas gaming centres.

They will be followed later this month by measures to deregulate the £800 million bingo industry, by removing it from the "hard" gambling category. This will remove all advertising restrictions and the power to refuse bingo licences on the grounds of "insufficient demand".

The deregulation order will also allow football pools companies to introduce midweek competitions to rival the Wednesday lottery draw, while casinos will be able to install more slot machines. Casinos and bingo clubs will also be permitted to accept payment by debit, although credit cards will still be banned. Licences for a further 21 casinos are being proposed.

The Home Office said commercial gaming would continue to be regulated to prevent criminal involvement and the exploitation of individual gamblers, but the rules should be applied flexibly.

The rules

☐ **National Lottery**
Rules: Players must be 16 or over; parents cannot claim money won by underage offspring
Odds: 14 million-1 on the jackpot
☐ **Pools**
Rules: None concerning punters
Returns: Little improvement since pre-lottery days of 30p in the pound being returned in prizes
☐ **Casinos**
Rules: Six basic games allowed; rules relaxed to reduce cooling-off period for new members to 24 hours and debit cards accepted later this month
Returns: varies from roulette with punter edge 1.4p to 2.7p in the pound, to blackjack, with house edge of 0.6 to 5.6p in the pound
☐ **Bingo**
Rules: Players must be over 18; restrictions on advertising relaxed
Returns: 90p in the pound returned to punter in cash bingo, 75p in prize bingo

The industry welcomed the moves as the first step towards relaxation of what they termed one of the most restrictive regulatory regimes in the world.

Brian Lemon, general secretary of the British Casino Association, said: "The reforms are significant, but ... the environment in which we must compete in the wider world has been transformed largely to Britain's disadvantage, and within Britain the laws are now widely seen as unnecessarily restrictive."

Jimmy Thomas, chairman of the Bingo Association of Great Britain, said: "This is a landmark measure for licensed bingo clubs across Britain ... The public will now be able to see for themselves what excellent and tremendous fun a night out at bingo really is."

But critics rounded on the changes as evidence that the Government was ignoring the social impact of gambling for the sake of raising revenue, and called for action to help gambling addicts.

The Bishop of Wakefield, Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, said: "I don't want to be a killjoy but we know from history that whenever there is an increase in gambling facilities there is an increase in problem gambling. If this decision has been made, then it is important to have in place protective and rescue measures for the people who will inevitably suffer because of it."

Sue Fisher, a specialist in gambling at Plymouth university, said: "Because of the long-term impact I would like to see more support, but there is a lot of pressure from an industry which contributes a lot to the exchequer, and that seems to have won the argument. It is irresponsible and a neglect of duty for the Government to allow this to happen without anybody monitoring the situation."

According to research by Ms Fisher for the Home Office last year, there are up to 1.5 million problem gamblers in Britain, with more than 500,000 who can be classed as "pathological or compulsive".

News in brief

Boy dies after being held in police cell

CONCERNS about the wisdom of holding juveniles in custody were heightened yesterday when a 15-year-old boy died after being found unconscious in a police cell.

The teenager, who has not been named, was being held at Hartlepool police station, Cleveland, after his arrest on suspicion of burglary. An investigation will now be carried out by the Police Complaints Authority. A police spokesman said the boy had been found unconscious on Monday, but she could not comment on reports that he was found hanging from his tracksuit bottoms.

A spokesman for The Howard League for Penal Reform said: "The question needs to be asked as to why he was not in the care of social services, the local authority or even at home."

TV comedian jailed

A WISECRACKING regular of the seventies television programme The Comedians was jailed for nine years yesterday for selling shotguns and pistols to the criminal underworld.

Gerry Thomas, aged 65, thought he was dealing with a crook when he handed over two sawn-off shotguns and six pistols, Gloucester crown court was told, but the buyer was an undercover policeman. Thomas, of Gloucester, admitted 10 charges of possessing and selling firearms and ammunition illegally.

Moby cleared from mudflats

THE 50ft sperm whale, known as Moby, which died after being washed up on the mudflats of the Firth of Forth, Scotland, was yesterday dragged out of the shallow waters by a vehicle breakdown truck. A post-mortem examination will be carried out to determine the cause of death.

Cook Report unfair

AN EDITION of ITV's The Cook Report, which investigated cases of women who claimed the Child Support Agency was not getting their ex-husbands to pay sufficient maintenance, has been ruled unfair by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. The commission upheld a complaint by Stephen Cameron that the programme had been unjust. – *Andrew Culf*

Theatre reprieve

SIR Alan Ayckbourn's seaside theatre was yesterday reprieved after North Yorkshire county council decided to reconsider a cut in funding. The Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, was set to close in September following the county council's decision to cut a grant of nearly £80,000. The theatre, which opened a year ago with financial backing from the playwright, will now receive £40,000.

Two pupils die in tragic weekend

Vivek Chaudhary

COUNSELLING sessions are to be offered to pupils of a Northamptonshire school when they return from the Easter break after two of their fellow students died in separate tragedies.

Ravi Visaria, aged 13, a former child model and actor who played a minor role in the hit musical Oliver!, was found hanging near his home in Kettering, Northamptonshire, on Saturday.

A day later, Mark Rockingham, aged 12, died after falling on to a sharp knife protruding from a dishwasher in the kitchen of his Kettering home. Both were year eight pupils at the Montagu secondary school in Kettering.

Ed Bains, headmaster at Montagu, said: "I have been head here for over nine years now and I think in that time we have had four tragedies — usually car crashes. To have two pupils die in the space of a weekend, well, it is quite shocking.

"We feel a great sense of loss. We are very much a family school. It is like losing two very close friends."

Mr Bains added: "Mark was a lively lad. He loved his football. He had apparently just come in from playing football when the accident happened."

According to Ravi Visaria's mother, Kuldip, the family suspected him of using solvents and had also noticed a change in his behaviour in the weeks before his death.

Mrs Visaria added: "He was a wonderful boy. So bright and so intelligent. He was a brilliant actor. He was very religious too. He used to meditate and read religious books.

"Three to four weeks ago, he changed completely. He was a completely different person.

"He would come home late at night, up to 2.30 in the morning. His hands were dirty and his eyes were glazed. We couldn't talk to him. We found out from school that he had sniffed lighter fluid with a few of his friends before Christmas."

Ravi's body was found hanging in woods behind garages near his home. His mother said that the family had removed all solvents from the house when they discovered that he was abusing them.

She added: "We asked him if he had been doing it again. He told us not to be silly. But we just couldn't get through to him. He didn't want to be part of the family any more."

Ravi played a workhouse boy in Oliver! during a 10-week run in 1995. He had also appeared in television documentaries and attended stage school.

A spokesman for Northamptonshire police said that there was nothing suspicious about Ravi's death.

Mark Rockingham was alone in the kitchen of his house when he died. Police have said he was reaching across the dishwasher to open a cupboard when he lost balance, falling on to the knife, which severed an artery.

US scientists retain belief in God, survey discovers

Tim Radford
Science Editor

FOUR out of 10 scientists in the US believe in God, according to a survey published today in Nature. Surprisingly, this ratio has not changed in 80 years.

A questionnaire sent to a random selection of 1,000 scientists put simple questions about belief in a personal God, and a desire for immortality — 600 answered. Just under 40 per cent described themselves as believers; 45 per cent did not believe and 14.5 per cent were doubters or agnostic.

The research was a rerun of a famous US study in 1916, which found very similar results. The irony, according to Edward Larson, an historian at the University of Georgia, and Larry Witham, a researcher in Maryland, is that the 1916 study predicted that disbelief would increase as scientific education increased.

"To the extent that both surveys are accurate readings," the two researchers say, "traditional Western theism has not lost its place among US scientists."

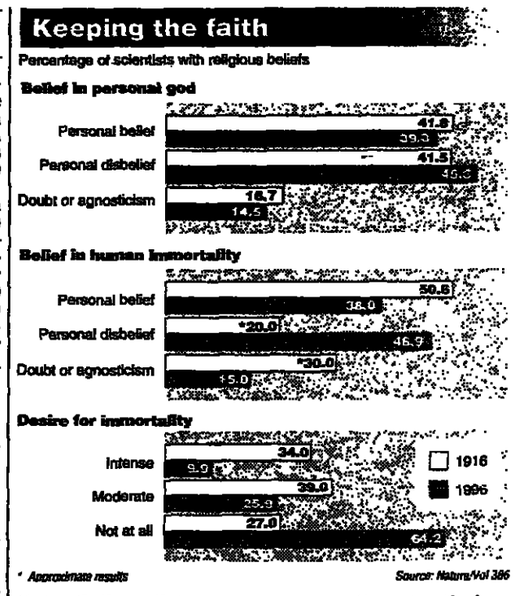
Biologists were the biggest doubters in 1916; physicists and astronomers are now the leading disbelievers, with 77.9 per cent denying the existence of God. Mathematicians are the most inclined to believe in God, with a total of 44.6 per cent.

"We expected a higher proportion of belief among physicists and disbelief among biologists," the researchers say. "But we were wrong."

In the US, 93 per cent of the population professes some religious belief. A similar survey might produce a different ratio in a less overtly religious Britain.

But many British churchmen — and many scientists — see the science versus religion debate as a hollow one.

"Scientists have been seen as non-religious largely because of the way they are portrayed in the media," said a Church of England spokesman.



Handcuffs on woman patient

Owen Bowcott

A WOMAN prisoner was forced to undress and undergo an intimate internal examination while handcuffed to an escorting officer, according to a complaint upheld by the prisons ombudsman.

The report, completed last year but not previously released, reveals that although the woman "practically begged" for her handcuffs to be removed, they were kept on throughout.

"I was in a lot of embarrassment," the prisoner told the ombudsman. "As I took off my knickers, it was like the officer had physically undressed me herself. Everywhere my hand went, her hand went too."

Details of the case, which has been taken up by the Association of Members of Boards of Visitors, emerged the day after it was disclosed that a lung transplant patient had been shackled on a return visit to hospital.

The incident which was the subject of the ombudsman's report occurred in the Royal Hampshire county hospital in August 1995. It resulted in "additional and unnecessary pain and humiliation", Sir Peter Woodhead, the prisons ombudsman, concluded.

The inmate, who wishes to remain anonymous, has since been released from Winchester prison. She is understood to be considering legal action.

"The Prison Service's own procedures, as set out in the Manual on Security, were not followed," the report noted. "The officers should have concluded that this was one of those situations where the use of handcuffs was inappropriate and the escorting chain substituted.

"Furthermore," Sir Peter added, "I consider the procedures failed to meet the Prison Service's duty to treat prisoners with humanity ..."

He said the director general of the Prison Service should apologise to the woman.

The report found that doctors were unaware that they had to ask prison officers for the chains to be removed.

The woman, who underwent a rectal examination because she was suffering a stomach complaint, told the ombudsman: "I was in stress, pain and very uncomfortable. My hands were shackled above my head with two officers looking on."

A Prison Service spokesman said yesterday: "The prison is satisfied that appropriate guidelines for escorting prisoners were complied with in this case."

Clifford Mickleburgh, chairman of the Association of Members of Boards of Visitors, said: "Cuffing is a painful and humiliating experience and not one easily forgotten."

Gardai hold man shot during attack on RUC post

Vivek Chaudhary

A MAN was arrested in the Irish Republic yesterday after it was claimed that a second person was involved in a bomb attack on an RUC station last week, when undercover soldiers opened fire.

It was initially reported that only one man was shot by the troops when an explosive device was thrown at the police station in Coalisland, Co Tyrone.

According to reports, a second man, who was also shot, escaped and was taken to the Irish Republic, where he received treatment in hospital for a bullet wound.

A Garda spokesman said a man was discharged and was being held at Dundalk police station under the Offences against the State Act.

The arrested man's whereabouts emerged during follow-up inquiries by the RUC and Garda.

Malachy Doris, aged 19, of Coalisland, who was shot during the attack and arrested, has been charged with the attempted murder of security forces and maliciously causing an explosion. He is recovering from a stomach wound under police guard at Belfast City hospital.

Ken Maginnis, Ulster Unionist MP, yesterday demanded that the second man be brought back to Northern Ireland for questioning.

London film festival rivals resolve up their differences

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

AFTER weeks of uncertainty and infighting, the London Film Festival (LFF) confirmed yesterday that it would go ahead as planned. Proposals for a rival to the British Film Institute's (BFI) annual festival by a group headed by Sheila Whitaker, the former director of the LFF, have been shelved.

Ms Whitaker has been taken on by the BFI as a member of a steering committee which will look at the shape of next year's LFF.

A statement issued by the BFI yesterday said the steering committee would investigate whether to turn the LFF into a competitive showcase.

UK 'way ahead' in Europe's car theft league

Vivek Chaudhary

MOTORISTS in Britain are at least twice as likely to have their cars stolen as anywhere else in Europe, according to a motor insurance company survey on vehicle theft.

The survey compared the number of cars stolen in each European country in 1995 with the total number of cars in use and found that in England and Wales alone a car was stolen every minute.

The findings put the UK on top of the car theft league, with an average of 22 cars stolen for every 1,000 on the road.

In France, next on the list, 11 cars were stolen for every 1,000 in use.

Car theft in the UK varied according to region, the survey by Eagle Star found. In England and Wales there were nearly 23 thefts per 1,000 cars in use, while in Scotland the figure was 15.5 thefts and in Northern Ireland 14.6.

In Austria, bottom of the list, fewer than 1½ cars per 1,000 were stolen in 1995.

The next safest country to leave your car in is Switzerland, where only three in every 1,000 were stolen.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said yesterday that the figures showed the types of cars being stolen on the Continent were the same as those being taken in the UK.

"This indicates more than anything else that we have a more thriving theft business, although we would not want to get away from the fact that UK figures are very high," said a spokesman.

"But we think progress is being made in that most of recent thefts have been of older cars and the figures for newer car thefts are falling."

Graham Johnston, spokesman for Eagle Star, said: "The UK remains the supreme car-crime black spot of Europe. The sad fact is that it is simply not safe to leave your car without taking more and more precautions.

"While government has a part to play in reducing crime, we would encourage motorists to play their part by fitting security devices, locking their vehicles at all times and keeping valuables out of view."

Union formed to save for hunt jobs

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

A UNION was launched yesterday to protect the jobs of the 90,000 people the organisers claim are employed in field sports.

Fear of the Labour Party's promise of a free vote in the next Parliament on the banning of hunting with hounds led to the launch of the Union of Country Sports Workers, its chairman, John Fretwell, said yesterday.

The union considered its members' jobs would be safer with a Tory government.

Mr Fretwell, who is huntsman of the Stowe Beagles, said: "Any political party which bans country sports will scar rural areas for ever. They will be knee-deep in dishonour knowing they have made thousands of people homeless and jobless. They will be alienated from the countryside for generations."

Although there are only 15,000 jobs directly involved in the hunting industry, including kennel staff, farriers, saddlers and 3,000 privately employed grooms, the union claims other field sports also feel threatened.

Andrew Kendall, master of the Waveney Harriers, said: "Once the campaigners have banned hunting with hounds the agenda moves on to shooting and fishing. Single issue campaigners focus on the next soft target. We are trying to wake people up to the threat to their jobs."

Reg Cripps, a 54-year-old gamekeeper from the Derbyshire Peaks, came to London yesterday to join the union. "We have a mole in an animals rights organisation and they want to ban everything, even sheep dog trials and pigeon racing. As far as they are concerned, it's all animal abuse," he said.

Most field sports workers earn £10,000 a year or less and rely on tied cottages for homes, the union says.

The union hopes to recruit 10,000 people in six months. "We have to get the message across on lost jobs and the devastating effect of banning field sports."

Hundreds of works thought to have been taken from France's Jews are going on show in Paris in the hope of tracing their owners, writes **Paul Webster**

Spoils of war: Nature Morte aux Figues by Desportes (left) and a detail from Renoir's Etude pour l'une des Grandes Baigneuses

Nazis' looted art on display

FRANCE'S forgotten multi-million-pound art treasury was partially unveiled yesterday during a private view of some of the hundreds of unclaimed paintings and other works of art looted by the Nazis but never restored to their French owners.

Five exhibitions in Paris and Versailles from next week will try to trace the original proprietors, most of whom are thought to have been Jews who died in concentration camps. Yesterday, 136 paintings and *objets d'art*, including many by the Impressionists, were shown to an invited group at the Orsay museum by the culture minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy.

The biggest show will be at the Louvre, where 678 of the finest treasures will be exhibited. Other works will be shown at Versailles, the Pompidou centre and the Sèvres porcelain museum.

Pressure to advertise almost 2,000 unclaimed looted works returned to France after the war has grown because of revelations that Jewish gold was hoarded by Switzerland and the identification of seized Jewish property in Paris which is still administered by the city council.

Mr Douste-Blazy defended French museums against claims that they had not assiduously sought the original owners' families in the past 50 years.

Because catalogues were secretly kept of all works of art seized or bought by the Nazis from private owners and museums, about 47,000 valuable objects were recovered after the war, of which 45,000 were given back. Many had been collected by Nazi arts commandos for leaders including Hitler and Goering.

All unclaimed works were exhibited in Compiègne, northern France, for four years before being sold or distributed to art galleries in Paris and the provinces in the mid-1950s.

"Not all of these works are masterpieces by a long way and many changed hands legitimately for a good price during the very active French art market during the war," Mr Douste-Blazy said. He denied there had been any attempt to hang on to the acquisitions.

The Orsay paintings, exhibited in two big rooms adjoining the main displays of 19th century works, include enough masterpieces to confirm the general suspicion that the owners' families were wiped out after being deported with the 75,000 French and foreign Jews handed over to the Nazis by Philippe Pétain's Vichy government.

Renoirs, Sisleys, Monets and Pissarros line the walls; from next week older masters such as Rubens and Delacroix will be on public view with more modern artists including Matisse and Picasso.

US seeks talks to defuse crisis

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

THE United States has proposed a summit between the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, and President Clinton, in the hope of defusing the crisis in Israel.

US officials in Washington have asked the Egyptian and Jordanian governments to persuade Mr Arafat to agree. An Egyptian government spokesman said in Cairo last night: "We have no objections, but it is entirely up to Chairman Arafat."

The initiative comes in the wake of escalating violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Eleven Israeli soldiers were injured yesterday, several seriously, after a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli bus near the Palestinian refugee camp of Jalazoun.

Two other Israelis, one a baby, were also hurt.

In Gaza yesterday, mourners paid their respects to the families of Anwar Shadrawi, aged 20, and Abdallah Madhoun, aged 19, believed to be the suicide bombers responsible for the failed attacks on Jewish settlements on Tuesday. Condolences also poured in at the homes of two Palestinian men shot dead by Israeli security forces in separate incidents in the West Bank.

Mr Arafat's spokesman, Marwan Kanafani, confirmed in Gaza last night that efforts were under way to bring the Israeli and Palestinian leaders together as soon as possible. He said Israeli and Palestinian officials were talking to Washington about the proposed summit.

Madeleine Albright, the US secretary of state, telephoned Mr Arafat twice yesterday and discussed the logistics of the summit.

Mr Netanyahu, who is travelling to Washington this weekend, told Israeli television last night: "There is a big understanding between Israel and the United States. Both of us attach great importance to the war against terror." Mr Netanyahu is expected to tell President Clinton at the White House next Monday that negotiations with the Palestinians will not be resumed as long as terrorist attacks continue.

In Washington, Mr Clinton called on Mr Arafat to declare "zero tolerance" for terrorism. "There has to be an attitude of zero tolerance, a determination to do all that can be reasonably done to maintain peace, so that negotiated progress can be made," Mr Clinton said. The Israeli army imposed a curfew yesterday on the Jalazoun refugee camp, north of Ramallah, after the bus attack.

The burnt-out Israeli army bus in Jalazoun after a Molotov cocktail attack yesterday in which 11 soldiers were injured PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILVERMAN

Unrest in Minsk as Yeltsin signs union treaty

James Meek in Moscow and Reuter in Minsk

POLICE clashed with nationalists in the Belarussian capital Minsk yesterday after President Alexander Lukashenko and the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, signed an outline treaty of union between the countries.

Police prevented protesters from marching on the Russian embassy in the former Soviet state and attacked the crowd with truncheons as some activists threw stones. Witnesses said police beat protesters at random and made about 100 arrests. Three journalists were among those detained.

At least one member of the public was injured and several policemen appeared to be hurt by the stones.

In signing a largely symbolic treaty, Mr Yeltsin has yielded to outrage from the media, liberals and some of his closest supporters. The document now stops far short of the full-scale reunification hoped for by Russian nationalists. It also keeps Belarus's unpredictable president at arm's length.

Until the last minute it had seemed that Mr Yeltsin and Mr Lukashenko would sign into being a new confederation deliberately modelled on a combination of Nato and the most extreme federalist version of the European Union.

In the end, to Mr Lukashenko's chagrin, they signed only a short, declarative document setting up a "Union of Russia and Belarus", which changes little in the existing loose community agreement between the two.

The most controversial articles of the unification plan — including the powers of a "higher council" which would have given the Belarussians an equal say with the Russian leadership in the new union — were put into a separate draft charter which will be thrown open to what is sure to be a stormy debate over the next six weeks.

"The union does not create a single state," said Mr Yeltsin before the signing ceremony in the Kremlin. "Each side maintains its sovereignty. At the same time it takes our integration into a qualitatively new phase."

He made clear the draft status of the charter which is now likely to be significantly revised. It will fix the nature of the union.

A senior Russian minister, Boris Nemtsov, expressed the relief of reformers when he said the new document was "much more thought-out than before, thanks to intelligent people".

Yet Mr Lukashenko's allies in Russia, like the Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, also said they were pleased. "I congratulate you," he said. "Once again, we are all living in the union."

As with last year's community treaty and an earlier customs union between the two countries, Mr Yeltsin is trying to placate popular Soviet nostalgic and Pan-Slavic sentiments. Many Russians bear a grudge against him for signing the 1991 treaty which dismantled the Soviet Union.

Lukashenko (left) and Yeltsin greet each other before signing the treaty

Closer ties between the Russian and Belarussian military would cock a snook at Nato, potentially creating a new front line between a Nato Poland and Belarus, and bringing Russian forward positions to within 40 miles of its western enclave, Kaliningrad.

Apart from a small minority of nationalists, Belarussians have not felt comfortable with independence, and most Russians, including liberals, support unification.

What Russian reformers fear is not so much a union with Belarus as a union with Mr Lukashenko, a glib populist who has spoken approvingly of Hitler and Stalin, repressed the media, trade unions and opposition politicians and given himself near-dictatorial powers.

New York loses the battle for historic island gateway

Ian Katz in New York

NEW YORKERS awoke yesterday morning to find their home state had shrunk by 22 acres. Even worse, the lost territory was some of the most famous real estate in the United States and it now belonged to their dowdy neighbour, New Jersey.

The boundary change, regarded by many New Yorkers as an annexation, was ordered by a mediator appointed by the Supreme Court to resolve a long dispute between the two states over who owns Ellis Island, the port of entry for millions of immigrants between 1892 and 1954.

Under the settlement recommended by the legal scholar, New York will keep five acres around the historic immigrant processing facility, now a museum, but must hand over the rest to its unlovely rival across the Hudson river.

New Yorkers were not amused. "It must have been a fix," said New York's mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. "Ellis Island is obviously part of New York. My recollection is that all those people who were coming here were coming to New York."

Officials in New Jersey, a state whose biggest attractions, until now, were an Ikea superstore and a football stadium, crowed with delight over their territorial triumph.

"This is a recognition of New Jersey's place in history," said the governor, Christine Todd Whitman. "It is a matter of pride for the state. It is a recognition that both New York and New Jersey have served as a gateway for millions of Americans who have made a real difference in the state and across the nation."

The dispute dates back to an 1834 treaty under which the boundary between the two states was drawn down the middle of the Hudson, but ownership of Ellis Island was granted to the Empire state.

The controversy intensified as New York enlarged the island with landfill over the years, increasing its area from the original 3.3 acres to 27.5 acres.

After decades of squabbling, New Jersey filed suit to claim the landfill areas in 1993. Its lawyers claimed New Jersey was the rightful owner of most of the island because, under the 1834 treaty, it held underwater rights to all the territory New York had created.

In his ruling, Paul Verkuil dismissed New York's claims that immigrants arriving by ship peered not at the dull New Jersey shore but at Manhattan's dramatic skyline.

Insurers facing action by Holocaust survivors

Martin Walker in Washington

THE biggest lawsuit in the history of insurance, an open-ended claim for fraud which could reach £15 billion, has been filed in New York on behalf of Holocaust victims against seven European insurance groups, including Germany's giant Allianz group.

This second step of legal retribution by Holocaust survivors and heirs follows the successful campaign against the Swiss government and Swiss banks, and is supported by some of New York's leading insurance lawyers and law professors. But it came about almost by accident.

"I was looking through a folder from one client, Marte Cornell, who had her dead father's journals and records relating to his bank account, and out fell his two old insurance policies. They were both Italian companies," said Edie Pollack, whose Romanian Jewish parents died in the camps. She began working as a legal volunteer last year.

"So then we started asking people who rang us about bank accounts if their families had any insurance, and the floodgates just opened. These are old people, and they deserve to get their rights now. And these policyholders are not only Jewish. We have Greeks, Germans, Italians."

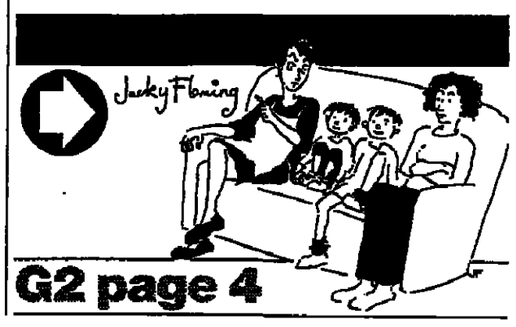
For months, over 1,000 people a week have been calling into Edward Fagan's New York law office to add their names to the class action lawsuit he filed last year against the Swiss banks. But the numbers of insurance claimants threatens to dwarf that suit.

"Insurance was the most prevalent way of saving in central and eastern Europe before the war," said Mr Fagan yesterday. "Only a limited number of people had Swiss bank accounts — but most families had an insurance policy.

"We now have over 14,000 people on the class action suit against the banks. My estimate is that we will have over 100,000 in the insurance lawsuit, in various categories. Some people have the original policies, some have policy numbers and receipts for premium payments. Others just know there was a policy once. We have asked the court for a very swift discovery process.

So far, no British insurance companies are named. But the lawsuit, filed in the US District Court this week, includes unnamed companies who could be held liable through the re-insurance system.

The Italian company Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà — part of the Allianz group — said yesterday that it had already compensated some descendants of Holocaust victims who held policies issued in eastern Europe before the second world war.



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The Prime Minister has called Mr Blair a chicken, and we all think he's a chicken
Conservative Central Office

I am sure we will persuade Worcester woman, Worcester Man, Worcester young person, and Worcester pensioner
Michael Heseltine

Major's offer to 'have-nots'

Family tax aid at centre of plans

Key extracts from the Conservative Party's 1997 election manfesto:

OUR aim is to spread opportunity for all to succeed, whoever they are and wherever they come from, provided they are prepared to work hard. To turn the "have-nots" into the "haves". To support the family in providing security and stability.

A Conservative government will keep public spending under tight control and ensure that it grows by less than the economy as a whole over the economic cycle. At the same time we will continue to spend more on the services which matter most to people — hospitals, schools and the police.

Over the next Parliament, we will achieve our goal for the government to spend less than 40 per cent of our national income. That means we can reduce the amount government borrows too, and meet our aim of moving towards a balanced budget in the medium term. Our plans show how we can virtually eliminate public borrowing by the year 2000.

Over the next Parliament, our aim will be to achieve our target of a 20p basic rate of income tax, while maintaining a maximum tax rate of no more than 40p.

We are launching an ambitious programme with industry to spread "IT for All", giving every adult the opportunity to try out and learn about new IT services. We will use the Millennium Lottery Fund to transform the computer facilities and information links available in schools, libraries, museums, voluntary organisations and other public places after the turn of the century.

We will keep Britain in the vanguard of new mobile service development — including mobile telephone and information services — by introducing a pricing system for the radio spectrum to achieve more efficient allocation of radio frequencies.

The next Conservative government intends to reform the tax system so that it gives substantially more help to families.

We will give priority to future reductions in personal taxation that help families looking after dependent children or relatives by allowing one partner's unused personal allowance to be transferred to a working spouse where they have these responsibilities. This will provide a targeted reduction in the tax bill to those families who need it most. Around 2 million one taxpayer couples with dependent children, or looking after elderly relatives and others needing care, would gain up to £17.50 a week — around £900 a year.

We will make it easier for small employers to set up personal pension plans for groups of employees. We will create more flexibility for people who save in personal pension plans to continue investing in those schemes if they subsequently move to jobs with company pension schemes. We will also create flexibility for employees with savings in Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC) schemes to take part of that pension earlier or later than their main company pension.

At the start of the next Parliament we will set out proposals to provide all young people entering the workforce with a personal pension fund paid for through a rebate on their national insurance contributions.

At retirement they would be entitled to the full pension earned by this accumulated investment. This could give them a pension significantly higher than they would currently receive from the state. But they will be guaranteed a pension at least equal to the current basic state pension, increased in line with inflation. This policy would come into effect early in the new millennium. Gradual phasing in of the new system over 40 years will make the impact on public finances affordable. Eventually the new policy will produce massive public expenditure savings.

We will introduce a Respite Care Programme. This will enable family members with heavy responsibilities caring for a relative to take a much needed break.

In the first session of the next Parliament we will implement our partnership scheme for long-term care, making it easier for people to afford the cost of care in old age without giving up their lifetime savings. We will protect the value of Child Benefit and Family Credit which help with the cost of bringing up children. This is our Family Benefits Guarantee. We will bring the structure of benefits for lone parents into line with that for two-parent families. We will pilot our Parent Plus Scheme that gives special help to lone parents who want to work, and extend it as it proves successful.

Over the next decade, we aim to raise some £25 billion of new private investment in housing estates by encouraging tenants in more than half of the remaining public sector housing stock to opt for transferring their homes to new landlords.

Building on what we have done, we can now offer a new pledge to parents — a guarantee of education standards.

First, we will set national targets for school performance that reflect our objective of ensuring that Britain is in the top league of international standards across the whole spectrum of education. Second, we will require every school to plan how to improve its performance, and to set targets which relate to similar schools and national standards. Third, we will give all parents full information on the performance of their child's school. Fourth, to underwrite our pledge, we will ensure action is taken to bring any underperforming school up to the mark.

We will give more talented children, from less well-off backgrounds, the opportunity to go to fee-paying schools by expanding the Assisted Places Scheme to cover all ages of compulsory education, in line with our current spending plans. We propose to develop it further into a wider scholarship scheme covering additional educational opportunities.

We will encourage more schools to become grant maintained and will allow new grant-maintained schools to be set up where there is sufficient local demand. We will give all grant-maintained schools greater freedoms to expand and to select their pupils.

We will extend the benefits of greater self-governance to all LEA schools. We will require local authorities to delegate more of schools' budgets to the schools themselves. We will give them more freedom over the employment of their staff and over admissions. And, where they want it, we will allow them to take over ownership of their assets, so they can make best use of the resources.

We will continue to encourage the establishment of more specialist schools in technology, arts, languages and sport. We aim to help one in five schools become specialist schools by 2001. We will allow all schools to select some of their pupils. We will help schools to become grammar schools in every major town where parents want that choice.

We will continue, year by year, to increase the real resources committed to the NHS, so NHS spending will continue to share in a growing economy.

We shall increase medical school intakes to 5,000 a year by the year 2000.

The number of nurses qualifying each year will increase in each of the next five years. We will continue to encourage the spread of fundholding among GPs. We shall implement "super surgeries" and practice-based cottage hospitals that can offer faster and more local treatment. We expect to see the number of nurses working in GP practices continue to grow, as will the number of GPs.

We will continue to develop a full range of services — including 24-hour nursed hostels and secure units — that can care for [the mentally ill] in a way which is most appropriate to them and the interests of the wider community. We will not close any long-stay mental hospitals unless it can be shown that adequate care services exist in the community.

We will guarantee to preserve the national identity, universal service and distinctive characteristics of the Royal Mail, while considering options — including different forms of privatisation — to introduce private capital and management skills into its operations. We will transfer Parcelforce to the private sector.

We will legislate to remove legal immunity from industrial action [in essential services] which has disproportionate or excessive effect. Members of the public and employers will be able to seek injunctions to prevent industrial action in these circumstances. Any strike action will also have to approved by a majority of all members eligible to vote and ballots will have to be repeated at regular intervals if negotiations are extended.

We will bring forward plans to privatise London Underground. Proceeds from privatisation will be recycled in order to modernise the network within five years — creating an Underground system to serve the capital in the 21st century. We will privatise the National Air Traffic System because it will be run better in the private sector.

We will fulfil the Prime Minister's pledge to support the installation of 10,000 CCTV cameras in town centres and public places in the three years to 1999. We will provide £75 million over the lifetime of the next Parliament to continue extending CCTV to town centres, villages and housing estates up and down the country that want to bid for support.

We will introduce a voluntary identity card scheme based on the new photographic driving licence. It will, for example, enable retailers to identify youngsters trying to buy alcohol and cigarettes or rent classified videos when they are under age.

We are developing a network of local teams to identify children who are at risk of turning to crime and to take early steps to address the factors which put them at risk. We will encourage these local child crime teams to refer children from primary school age upwards who are at risk of, or actually, offending to programmes to tackle their behaviour and fully involve their parents.

The courts would be able to impose an order — a Parental Control Order — on the parents of children who they believed could keep control of their children but were refusing to do so. Courts will be given the power to attach conditions. Parents who breached these conditions would face a range of possible sanctions.

We will extend electronically-monitored curfew orders nationwide for those aged 16 and over. We will provide another 8,500 prison places by the year 2000.

We will give courts in all cases the discretion to allow witnesses to give evidence anonymously if they believe them to be at risk from reprisal. We will also take action to allow a judge to stop a defendant from personally questioning the victim in rape cases and other cases where the victim is particularly vulnerable.

We will bring forward in the next Parliament a package of measures designed to modernise the current systems for dealing with City fraud. This will include legislation to allow the Inland Revenue to pass confidential information to the police, the Serious Fraud Office and the financial regulators to assist in the investigation of cases involving serious financial fraud.

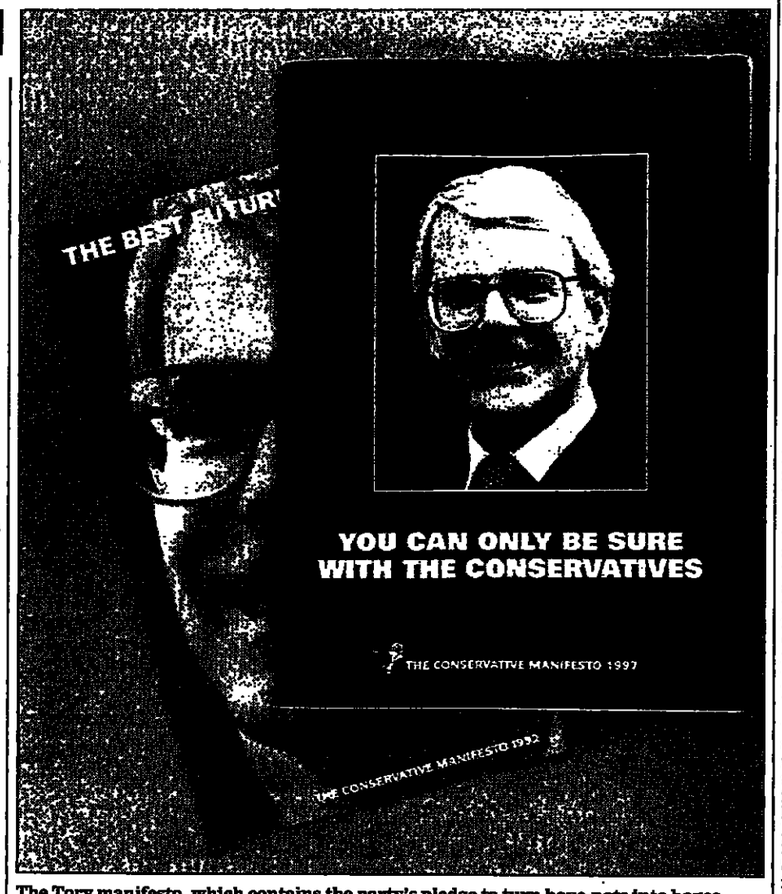
We will tighten up control over food safety by appointing a powerful and independent Chief Food Safety Adviser and Food Safety Council to advise government. We will set tough, but affordable targets, with published environmental strategies to improve air quality and banish city smog — with tighter standards on vehicle emissions and pollution crackdowns around the country.

We will encourage new ways of distributing awards to support the performing arts — through support for amateur productions and community events, provid-

turn to page 7, column 1

Main points

- ☐ Basic Pensions Plus scheme to offer a chance to build up private pensions for all.
- ☐ Launch of long-term care scheme, aimed to make it easier for the elderly to afford care without giving up savings.
- ☐ Respite Care Programme to enable family carers to take a break.
- ☐ Education guarantee on standards — including national targets for schools and action on underperforming schools.
- ☐ State schools to be given greater powers of self-governance, with powers to take over their own buildings and assets.
- ☐ Guarantee of year-by-year real-terms increases in NHS resources.
- ☐ Commitment to expand NHS medical schools by 5,000 places a year by 2000 and 2,500 nurses qualifying each year within the next five years.
- ☐ £75 million commitment to extend close-circuit TV systems to curb crime.
- ☐ New powers for courts to speed punishment for juvenile offenders; restored plans for minimum sentences to repeat burglars and drug dealers.
- ☐ Pledge to raise £25 billion of private investment to clean up housing estates.



The Tory manifesto, which contains the party's pledge to turn have-nots into haves

Tories hatch plot to dog Blair with chicken, over claim he wants to duck debate

Campaign Day

Martin Wainwright

PADDY Ashdown's eyes were narrower than ever at yesterday's Liberal Democrat press conference — the result, he admitted, of a night with Tabitha rather than the crack-of-dawn start allocated to the junior party under election rules.

Sleaze trigger-fingers twitched; but the party leader's tryst had been nothing to alarm Cosmo Gordon Long, the severe Archbishop whose portrait looks down on the daily Lib Dem gatherings in Church House, Westminster. "Tabitha," he rapidly explained "is an auxiliary nurse at Guy's hospital, where I spent two hours working as a sort of auxiliary auxiliary, serving out tea and evening meals." It was the first of a planned, no-warning series of "media free" Paddy incursions into the real world during the campaign.

Labour chose not to compete with the launch of the Conservative manifesto and cloistered Mr Blair with advisers about his own Grand Occasion today. (Did they also, wondered several journalists, consider the prominence their grey platform with its black cobweb rose gives to the leader's surprisingly large feet?).

John Prescott (below) stumped genially about at Uttoxeter cattle market and the morning press conference featured Margaret Beckett for in an uncontroversial chat with Gordon Brown. Party officials were briefly energised into picketing the Tory manifesto launch with leaflets offering Three Questions for John Major. But the Tories were ready with Three Answers to Labour, plus a reply to some comments of Gordon Brown at Labour's press conference — themselves a reply to John Major minutes earlier on Radio 4's Today programme, so hectic is the pace.

Labour's little commando raid was enough, however, to trigger a massive counter-attack this morning, to be led by a freelance entertainer and musician disguised as an enormous fluffy chicken. Although a floating voter, 39-year-old Noel Flanagan was hired by the Conservatives to dog Mr Blair round the country, accusing him of ducking the TV debate with John Major and Paddy Ashdown.

"The Prime Minister has called Mr Blair a chicken and we all think he's a chicken," said Central Office as the highly secret yellow costume was wrapped and bundled off for a picture exclusive with a favourite newspaper. The movements of the Blair Battlebus are kept secret until the last minute, but the Conservatives are determined that the chicken will get through.

Their own big show had that special air of homely lack of excitement which Mr Major has made a speciality. The Prime Minister played Mr Purser Major ticking off a ship's manifest: "On our voyage to Prosperity we will take 75 kettles, and two hundred coils of rope, and 20 crates of ship's biscuits . . ." In his endearing way, he even muffed the emphasis on the daring assertion: "It *is* time for change."

But the party's technical whizzes had been at work to enliven proceedings. A fantastic range of options had been programmed into TV monitors on which the message Welcome to Conservative Central Office kept appearing and vanishing in innovative ways.

After the official proceedings, Kenneth Clarke (below) chortled to journalists: boom and bust is over; from now on, it's a gentle cycle and all progress. "This was off the record," said campaign manager Charles Lewington.

Out on the stump, Michael Heseltine had caught the same mood in Worcester, the home of the psephologists' darling Worcester Woman who is believed to hold the key to another term for the Tories.

"I am sure we will persuade Worcester Woman, and Worcester Man, and Worcester Young Person, and Worcester Student and Worcester Pensioner," the deputy prime minister announced on a walkabout in the city.

Back in London, the 56-page Conservative manifesto (multi-illustrated in contrast to 1992's text-only version) was meanwhile being subjected to impressively-detailed scrutiny. Most detective work focused on a mystery bus photograph in a collage of pictures representing 'World Class Health and Public Service'; why had its destination board been airbrushed into a smudge?

Research eventually tracked the vehicle, via its red-and-white livery and number 54, to the Newcastle upon Tyne - Gateshead route, travelling entirely through Labour-held territory.

Central Office denied hi-tech political suppression, but left suspicions unallayed.

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The effect of these policies will be a redistribution of the tax burden on to other couples and working single parents
Institute for Fiscal Studies

What I have done is provide an incentive for families to be able to meet obligations to people they most care about'
John Major

Traditional families benefit by £17.90 a week □ Major says introduction of basic rate of 20p in pound will be delayed

Two million gain in £1.2bn tax plan

David Hencke and **Sarah Ryle** on a scheme to woo millions of wavering voters in Middle England

The party emphasised it was not a moral decision. Kenneth Clarke said it would not be enough to send people 'rushing out to hear wedding bells'

JOHN Major's carefully crafted tax break for married parents is designed to woo millions of wavering Tory voters at very little cost.

For just £1.2 billion — less than a penny on the basic rate of tax would cost the Exchequer — the Tories sent a clear message of support to the two million people who fit the traditional family image: one male breadwinner, one mother with children still at home or caring for an elderly or infirm relative.

Middle-Englanders living in key marginal towns in the Home Counties, resentful of the burden on the welfare state that the breakdown of the family has created, will be virtually the only group to gain from the measure.

Mr Major summed up what he hoped would be the attraction of the proposals: "What I have done is provide an incentive for families to be able to meet obligations with dignity that they would wish to meet to the people they most care about: their children and people they care for."

But according to independent analysis, the reality behind this attempt to boost the Tory image as the party of traditional family values is less clear-cut.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) yesterday published a study of the impact of every Tory tax reform relating to married couples since 1990 and concluded that the erosion of the married couple's allowance offsets any gain from the new measure.

The IFS says what Mr Major is offering with one hand to two million families, he is taking away from the other 20 million households whether they are in work or not. Two hundred thousand of the two million who will benefit are carers of an elderly or infirm relative.

"The overall effect of these policies will be a redistribution of the tax burden away from one particular group — married couples with children where only one partner works — and on to other couples and working single parents."

The principle of rewarding the wife or husband with a tax break if they stay at home as a carer takes the tax system back to 1942 and the Wife's Earned Income Allowance.

The IFS confirms that the scheme will cost £1.2 billion, with a maximum gain for any family of £17.90 a week.

The tax experts looked yesterday at the impact of funding the new family tax break and the erosion of the value of the married couple's allowance since 1990.

The IFS calculates that the net cost of these changes means on average that each adult will be 90p per week worse off.

Within that average figure, couples with children and one working partner will be £5.70 a week better off than they were in 1990 as the new plan will compensate for the loss through lower married couples' allowance.

However, single earners with no children will be £3.20 a week worse off, and two earner parents £4.30 a week worse off.

The IFS points out that poorer, but not the very poorest, families will be the only ones to gain anything from the proposals — counter to the Tories' image as a party whose tax reforms have boosted inequality.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) argued that the measure will fail the majority of UK families.

First, children classed as living in poverty are even less likely to benefit from the measure, because 70 per cent of them live in households without an earner and do not come into the tax system.

Secondly, according to the CPAG, nearly a third of households are not headed by a married couple. The majority are lone parent families and they will lose out under the Tory proposal to cut lone parent benefit at a cost of £6.30 per week.

On top of this, Mr Major made clear that all taxpayers will have to wait longer for the Conservatives to implement their pledge of a basic tax rate of 20p in the pound.

Although the taxpayers who manage to qualify for the new tax break will gain relief on the income they pay the basic rate of 23 per cent tax on, Conservative Central Office said those earning more than £28,000 a year — and paying the higher rate 40 per cent tax — will not gain.

In their case the Chancellor will claw back the gain through the tax system. Cohabiting couples, where there is one earner, will not receive any benefit.

The tax break will mean a married couple with one earner can transfer the non-earning spouse's personal allowance of £4,045 to their partner. The earner will not pay tax on the first £8,090 — not including any benefit from married couple's allowance.

The Conservatives were emphasising that it was not a moral decision. Mr Clarke said £17.50 would not be enough to send people "rushing out to hear wedding bells".

John Major's carefully-timed announcement caught Labour cold. It has no equivalent scheme. Its tax promises are founded on a proposal to introduce a 10p lower rate which it argues would help the real have-nots in society.

It has argued that the Tory tax reforms have boosted income inequality over the last 18 years and views the super-low rate as a means of redressing the balance.

But the IFS has said the 10 pence tax rate would fail to achieve the goals Labour has specified and would be very costly. Higher rate taxpayers would benefit from such a move, compounding the shift in the tax burden away from the middle classes.

Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown repeated his party's clear tax proposal for a 1p levy to fund improvements in education.

Devil hidden in manifesto detail

Alan Travis and **John Carvel** examine whether the Tory revolution has run out of steam

JOHN Major's manifesto for a fifth-term Conservative government promises more of the same — more grammar schools, more privatisations, more bans on strikes — but with a more caring face.

But for an answer to the question of whether or not the 18-year-old "Conservative revolution" has run out of steam, look at the small print in the manifesto.

For example, the ban on strikes in essential public services is tempered by qualification that it will only apply to "industrial action which has a disproportionate or excessive effect". Similarly, a promise to privatise Parcelforce comes with a rider to "consider options — including different forms of privatisation — to introduce private capital" into the Royal Mail.

Notable absences from the manifesto include a much-trailed national identity card scheme and any clearer definition of the Government's position on Europe.

In terms of fresh initiatives unveiled yesterday, education took second place only to the planned married couple's tax break. Law and order, which has been dominant during the last parliament, was well down the agenda.

In education, the devil lies in the detail. The manifesto promises that there will be "a grammar school in every town where parents want that choice". But parents with children under 11 will get no say about whether the secondary schools in their area should become more selective. The Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, confirmed any change in admission procedures would be decided only by its governors and parents of children already at the school.

The manifesto plan to delegate more of the education budget directly to mainstream council-maintained schools would halve the money available to be spent by local education authorities. Schools would take over responsibility for repairs and maintenance, home-school transport, meals, provision for special educational needs and other duties, gaining an average £302 per pupil.

There would be legislation to introducethis change for all council-maintained schools. In the longer term, governing bodies would be allowed to extend their autonomy by taking control of buildings and other assets, with powers to borrow against them to invest.

The long-held parallel aim of removing local authority control of council housing continues with "ambitious plans" to transfer more than one-half of the remaining council estates to housing associations or other private landlords. Ministers hope that will "lever in" £25 billion of private investment to improve the estates.

Social security policy features strongly. Mr Major announced a £53 million "respite care programme" for those who look after relatives to take a break. Some £3 million is to be spent helping people return to work "when their caring responsibilities close". But there is no detail on more far-reaching reforms such as the privatisation of social services, currently the subject of white paper consultation.

The privatisation programme is of a much smaller scale than in 1992. Now only London Underground, Parcelforce and Air Traffic Control are in the frame. Again, Major is backing off privatising the Royal Mail with only "exploratory wording" in the manifesto on the Post Office.

An estimated £200 million a year is to be raised through the auction of licences for the next generation of mobile phones.

Regarding law and order, the Prime Minister concentrated on the implementation of the Crime (Sentences) Act, which will introduce mandatory sentences for persistent criminals.

Courts will have the discretion to allow witnesses to give evidence anonymously if they believe themselves to be at risk from reprisal. A further £15 million is to be spent extending closed circuit television and £20 million goes on electronic tagging.

Major's offer to aid 'have-nots'

continued from page 6

ing more musical instruments, and helping productions tour round the country. The National Lottery will also help us train and promote British sporting talent.

No Conservative government will sign up to the Social Chapter or introduce a national minimum wage.

We will insist at the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam that our opt-out is honoured and that Britain is exempted from the Working Time Directive: if old agreements are broken, we do not see how new ones can be made. We will resist the imposition of other social burdens on the work place through a new European employment chapter.

The Government has a positive vision for the European Union as a partnership of nations. We want to be in Europe but not run by Europe. We have much to gain from our membership of the European Union — in trade, in co-operation between governments, and in preserving European peace.

However, in June, the nations of the European Union will gather in Amsterdam to negotiate possible amendments to the Treaty of Rome. It is a moment of truth, setting the direction in which the European Union will go.

A Conservative government will seek a partnership of nation states. Some others would like to build a federal Europe. A British Conservative government will not allow Britain to be part of a federal European state.

The creation of a European single currency would be of enormous significance for all European states whether they are members or not.

It is in our national interest to take part in the negotiations. We believe that it is very unlikely that there will be sufficient convergence of economic conditions across Europe for a single currency to proceed safely on the target date of January 1 1999. No such decision would be implemented unless the British people gave their express approval in a referendum.

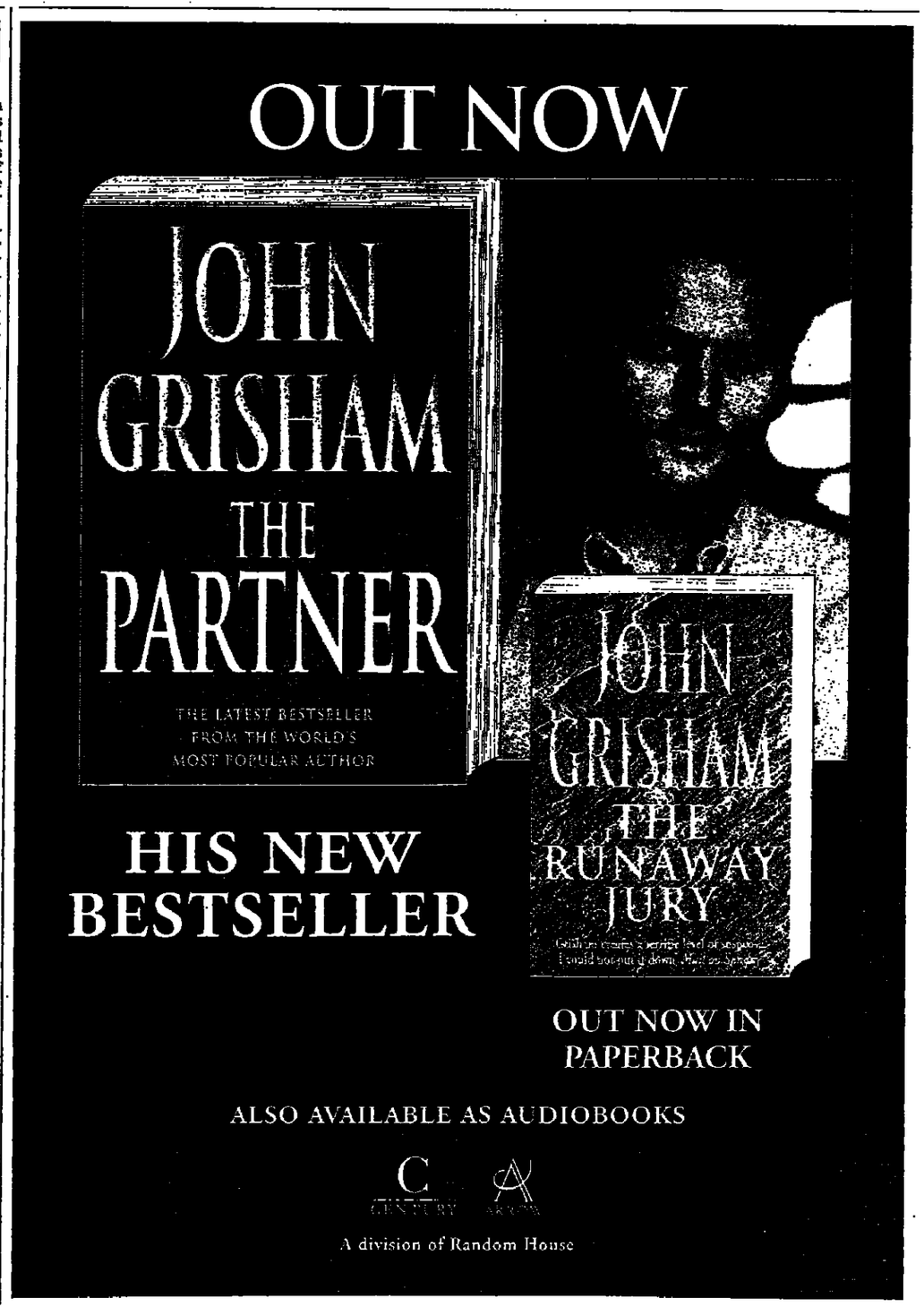
Regional government would be a dangerously centralising measure — taking power away from elected local authorities. We wish to go in the opposite direction, shifting power to the local neighbourhood — for example, by giving more power to parish councils.

To give Parliament more time to consider legislation thoroughly we will extend the Queen's Speech to cover not only legislation for the immediate year but also provisional plans for legislation in the year after that. This will mean that more draft bills will be subject to public scrutiny before they reach the floor of the House of Commons.

While preserving the role of Parliament at the centre of the Union, we have given new powers to the Scottish Grand Committee and Welsh Grand Committeein, enabling Scottish and Welsh MPs to call ministers to account and debate legislation which affects those countries — something that would be impossible with separate assemblies.

After a quarter of a century we wish to see the unique and originally temporary system of direct rule in Northern Ireland ended and a successful restoration of local accountable democracy achieved.

At this election the British people face a stark choice. They can elect to continue down the road of success and achievement. Or they can elect to take a huge risk with that future — the future of themselves, their children, their nation — by handing over the government of the country to politicians who have fought, opposed and denigrated every step that has been taken to restore Britain's economic health and standing in the world. You can only be sure with the Conservatives.



The first extended bulletin gave away BBC1's doubts about keeping viewers interested. The subject was voter apathy
Mark Lawson

The difference between parties is minimal. It's the first time in my life I have been unsure; I have always voted Conservative
Michael Winner

Couples' tax break comes at a price

Commentary

Larry Elliott

JOHN Major was feeling awfully pleased with himself yesterday. After the two weeks of purgatory he has endured since the start of the election campaign, he obviously saw his plan to give a tax break to married couples as the beginning of the Conservatives' long-awaited recovery.

Whether giving £18 a week to a parent who gives up work to look after the children or eldlerly relatives is a political masterstroke remains to be seen. What is certain is that it is terrible economics.

Put simply, the political calculus behind the tax proposal is that it will play well with the swing voters in the Tory marginals that need to be won if the Conservatives are to win a fifth term.

But while Basildon man and Worcester woman might appreciate an extra £900 a year from the Inland Revenue, they are unlikely to be impressed by the inevitable price of their tax cut: higher mortgage rates.

With only around 2 million couples set to gain from the plan, this may not be seen as a price worth paying. The cost of home loans is currently lower than it has been for a generation, but the economy has been prevented from lapsing into a traditional British boom-bust cycle by the tough fiscal measures adopted by the Government over the past 4½ years.

This trade-off was effectively forced on Mr Major once the economy was liberated from the Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1992.

By a stroke of good fortune, Mr Major stumbled upon a policy that ensured recovery from a deep, long and self-inflicted recession; sterling depreciated by 15 per cent, base rates came down from 10 per cent to 6 per cent.

But the political cost of this easing of monetary policy was that fiscal policy had to be tightened aggressively. The two Budgets in 1993 raised taxes by £17 billion, helping both to reduce the deficit accumulated during the recession and to prevent lower base rates leading to an explosion in consumer spending.

The Treasury was almost beside itself with glee at the way the recovery developed. Confounding the pundits, Britain experienced a spell of non-inflationary growth in which unemployment came down without triggering the customary rise in earnings. The UK's performance has not been nearly so spectacular as the Conservative propagandists would have us believe, but the economy is nevertheless in reasonably good shape.

Kenneth Clarke knew that this mix of monetary and fiscal policy was right, particularly for a country like Britain which has a propensity to consume more than it can afford.

That is why the Chancellor persisted with it right up until the start of the election campaign. Expectations were high that the Chancellor would come up with extravagant tax cuts in both the 1995 and 1996 Budgets. On both occasions Mr Clarke came up with packages that were — given the size of the Government's opinion poll deficit — almost models of Gladstonian fiscal rectitude.

Now, with four weeks to go until polling day, it appears that the Government has had a change of heart.

With high street spending rising rapidly, the housing market buoyant, consumer credit increasing by a record amount last month, and the Government's finances still deeply in the red, Mr Major has decided that the time is right to relax fiscal policy.

Whatever the eventual size of the tax break, one thing is certain. It will all be spent by hard-pressed families rather than saved. The prospect of tax cuts to come will boost consumer spending, creating additional upward pressure on demand at a time when the economy is already starting to run up against shortages of capacity.

The governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, is already baying for higher interest rates to damp down the economy; the more exuberant consumers become the larger the increase in borrowing costs will have to be.

This would be unwelcome news for individuals, but it would also be the wrong recipe for the economy as a whole.

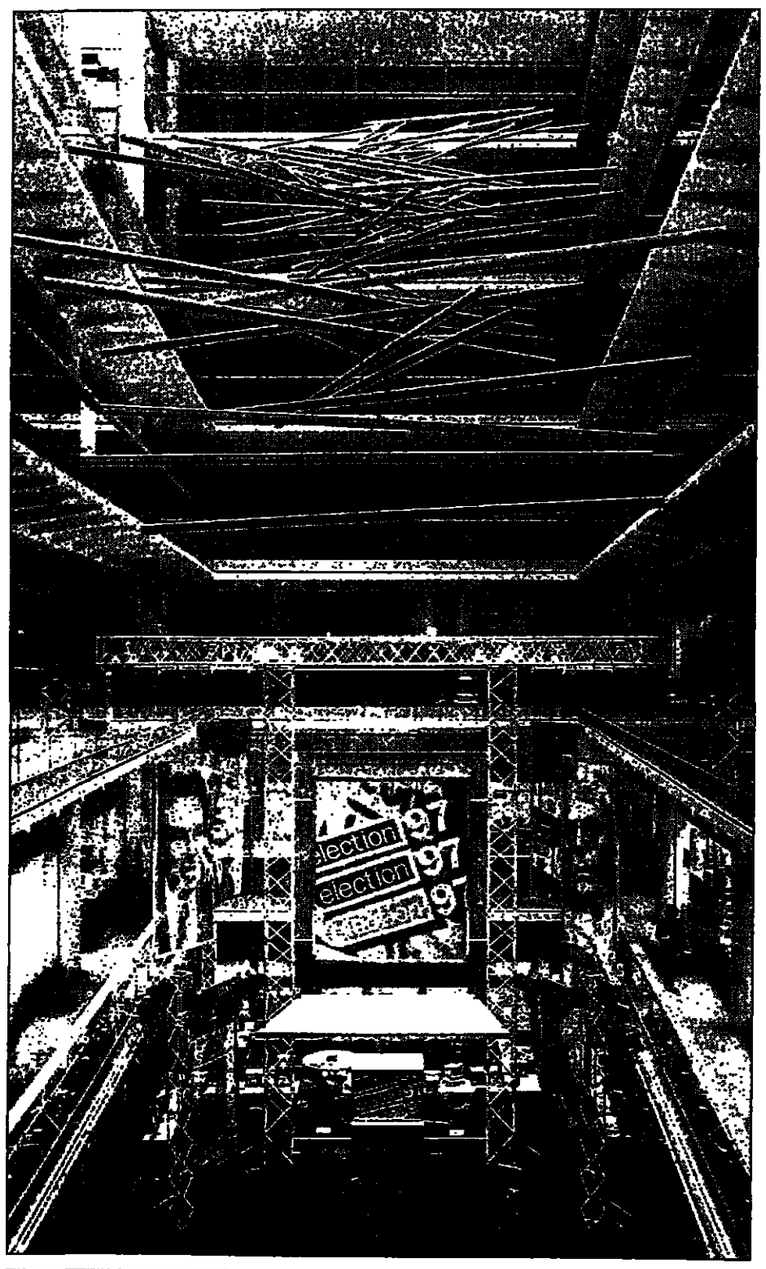
Last night the pound's value was almost back to the levels it was at on Black Wednesday, and industry is starting to once again suffer from an over-valued exchange rate.

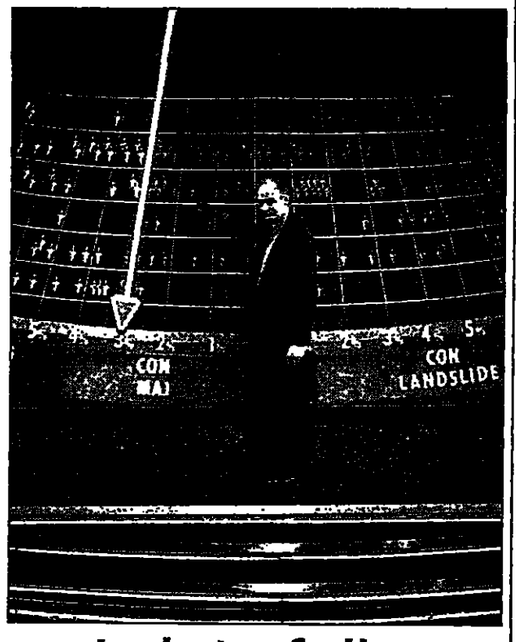
The sensible course would be to tighten fiscal policy by raising taxes. That would have the effect of cooling down the economy, taking the pressure off the authorities to raise interest rates. Market expectations that borrowing costs were not about to go up would, in turn, lead to a weaker pound, thereby helping exports.

At a micro-economic level, Labour was right to argue that the move would do nothing to improve the finances of the 20 per cent of households where none of the occupants of working age have a job. There could be a slightly beneficial impact on work incentives for workless households — because take-home pay would rise as a result of the transferable tax allowance — but independent analysis has shown that 70 per cent of the gain would be swallowed up by the loss of state benefits.

For the time being, these sorts of considerations play second fiddle to the need to regain the political initiative. Yet the fact remains that Mr Major's tax and spending proposals can only be afforded if the economy grows by at least 2.75 per cent a year for the next five years, compared with an average of under 2 per cent since 1979.

This is the Nigel Lawson theory of public finances — where unsustainable growth rates are used to justify tax cuts. Most of us can remember where that led.





ITN's election news set (left) is vying with the attractions of Peter Snow's traditional swingometer (1992 version, right). Sheila Gunn (above with colleagues) was described by the BBC's political editor as an adviser, her Labour equivalent Alastair Campbell as a spin doctor, an incongruity the party's advisers will no doubt want to complain about
MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

Debate nobody wants

Locals are irritating extras on polls day

County elections

COUNCIL elections are only interesting as interim verdicts on ministers' performance, and not when national parties are fighting over the keys to Westminster themselves. They're a distraction on general election day. Conservatives don't like local government, Labour is embarrassed by remaining whiffs of loony-leftdom.

The last county elections in 1993 saw the nadir of Conservative fortunes in the wake of Black Wednesday the previous autumn. The tradition of the Tory shires was destroyed — just Buckinghamshire remained waving the blue flag.

Now the only time Tories talk about local authorities is to castigate Labour ones and strip away powers, particularly in education and social services.

For the Tories, the counties, whose main services are in those very two areas, don't seem worth fighting for since councils should merely ensure services are delivered (by other organisations, if possible), not act as a focus for rebellion against central government. Conservatives may not feel this way three years down the line of an unpopular Labour government.

Council tax bills come through the letter box, and are visible in a way that income tax and national insurance payments are not.

Why they should be talking about them

A recent opinion poll, by MORI, suggested voters were more satisfied with their local council than with Parliament, and it might not be May Day, May Day for the Conservatives at local level this time. Even their political opponents don't expect them to do as badly. Turn-out could be twice as high, because of the "attraction" of the general election. The elections are for the shires and the new shadow unitary authorities.

Labour, promising one-nationhood and more democratic engagement with the population at times other than elections, needs to maintain its rural presence too.

For a party that is the second largest in local government, the Liberal Democrats have been remarkably quiet so far about their record, except for saying they control four times as many councils as the Tories.

This will change. Their local election results are generally far better than their national opinion poll performances. Now is the time for Lib Dems to prove a council vote is not a protest vote. They have promised a 1p tax rise to pay for education improvements. That implies bigger shire budgets.

What could be done?

One answer would be to remove capping limits and allow councils to set their own levels of tax free of central government control. Voters who did not approve could vote out high spenders and help ensure local elections on local issues. In return, councils would have to provide minimum standards of service or risk financial or political penalties.

James Meikle

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The Guardian
FridayReview

Hi-tech coverage gets into full swing with the Two Peters Show

Television

Mark Lawson

THIS is the most hi-tech election there has ever been: the final caption on every news bulletin is the programme's web-site address. It's the old equipment, though, that viewers really want.

You knew that the campaign had truly started on Tuesday when Peter Snow unveiled his swingometer. For the duration of the campaign, Snow resigns his Newsnight seat to stand before a peak-time constituency with his famous prediction machine for the Nine O'Clock News (BBC1), read by Peter Sissons.

"Peter?" said Sissons. "Peter!" acknowledged Snow. In current affairs broadcasting, the word "Peter" seems to be employed much as the word "Roger" is used by mini-cab firms. Snow had exciting news. Whoever is the next Prime Minister, his equipment is a winner. "Peter — whatever the outcome, it's certain the election will break records on our swingometer. If the Tories win, it will be a record recovery. But, if Labour win, they too will break records."

For Election '97, the swingometer is a big computer-generated clockface, half red, half blue. A thick white arrow registers the swings and the circle can be tilted to reveal a solid edge imprinted with the state of the parties.

Ideally, for this election Snow would have a sleazometer — featuring, perhaps, a black-stockinged leg swinging towards a hand containing a brown envelope ("And Piers Merchant has been a bit of a swinger!") — but he still brings his traditional enthusiasm to the traditional number-crunching. There has been a lot of fuss about the use of a rock music backing track during Channel 5 News. But what's so novel about that? Peter Snow has been break-dancing during news programmes for years.

Until election day, the Nine O'Clock News doubles in length to one hour. This has made a lot of people very happy. Those people are the programme controllers of BBC2, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5. In the first week of a five-channel ratings war, BBC1 has been forced to wave the white flag. The first extended bulletin rather gave away its doubts about keeping viewers interested. "Each night — at this point — we'll be reporting on a campaign issue," announced Sissons. The first subject addressed was voter apathy. Jon Sopel travelled around the country asking people why they found politics a turn-off.

Despite the evidence of its own report on campaign boredom, the BBC still sees elections as the ultimate test of public service broadcasting. The main evening bulletin also boasts a swanky new logo: a yellow cross within a red circle with a blue 97 in the middle of the cross. In contrast, News At Ten (ITV) remains the same size and keeps the usual set.

Not really trusted to interview politicians these days — after a notorious episode of under-arm bowling to John Major — Trevor McDonald launched the election coverage with an in-depth interview with the ITN political editor, Michael Brunson.

Apart from the web-site addresses, the main obvious change from the '92 coverage so far is an attempt to expose the behind-the-scenes manipulation of the images. Footage of photo-opportunities is very rarely filmed front-on with a clean frame: the attendant media pack is usually kept in shot.

A report on the parties' press conferences by the BBC's political editor, Robin Oakley, included footage of the main party spin doctors: Sheila Gunn of the Conservatives and Alastair Campbell of Labour. But, oddly, Oakley identified Gunn as an "adviser" and Campbell as a "spin doctor". You can be sure Labour's advisers will be on the phone about that.

The campaign has begun with a defeat for Campbell. The BBC allocates a reporter to each campaign. Dr Campbell made it clear that he did not want Jeremy Vine, a young man with a klaxon voice and windmill arms and an eye for cheeky metaphors. But Vine it is on the Blair battlebus for the BBC. His first report — limbs and diphthongs lurching off in unexpected directions — reassured viewers that there is someone ready to take over when Peter Snow has his final swing.

Why I am undecided

'The more nutcases, the better'

Michael Winner

I AM veering greatly, but I am finding enormous delight in being undecided. It's the first time in my life I have been unsure; I have always voted Conservative.

John Major has done a wonderful job with the economy but he appears to have a highly rebellious rabble sinking in sleaze.

On the surface Tony Blair is an extreme disciplinarian who has got the left imprisoned but he is offering very similar policies.

I have never seen anything like this in the history of the country.

The differences between the parties are minimal. You know if you elect John Major you get a Conservative (albeit an unattractive group) but it's uncertain what you get with Tony Blair.

I do find Blair admirable. I know him, I have met him several times and I am certain he wishes to run the country the way he says he will.

I will be telling people who I voted for after the election. At the moment it's good fun to just write about the proceedings.

I get about 200 letters a week from the readers of my News of the World column. Only 20-30 concern politics and mainly ask me my opinions, the rest are preoccupied with asking about my private life.

Within my own constituency of Kensington and Chelsea, which has the safest Conservative seat in the country, the Conservative candidate is Alan Clark. I like him; the more nutcases you have in Parliament the better. It's very hard for voters who don't want the party but still want the candidate.

This is going to be the first election in my life where I have taken my vote seriously.

Should we risk a set of people who have no experience in government and at a time when we have a great deal to lose? On the surface Labour appears very attractive, but that's almost entirely due to Blair himself. All the others are locked in the classroom — but what happens when they are let out?

Interview by Lucie Morris

John Major . . . If he loses badly, he will still have been prime minister for six years, five months and four days. He will be blamed for much, but so will his increasingly unmanageable party after 18 years of unbroken office PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

In his favourite role: the underdog

John Major believes he deserves to win. **Michael White** looks at the reasons

JOHN Major confided to a pollster before Christmas that he expected to lose the coming election by six seats. No big deal there, you can never trust pollsters or politicians when it comes to spinning election numbers. And both will have changed their minds six times since then.

In any case, John Major is famous for saying different things to different people. It is one of the reasons which won him the party leadership in 1990, as Margaret Thatcher's chosen successor who was, so David Mellor confided, also "the most leftwing candidate" on offer.

Such ambiguities have sustained his premiership — and got him into trouble — from that day onwards. But yesterday Mr Major appeared at the Conservative manifesto launch in his favourite unambiguous posture, as the plucky underdog who is going to win against the odds for a second time.

He was patient with hostile questions and called everyone by their first names, Elinor, Robin, Adam. He was even nice to the New Statesman. It all shows what a relatively quiet Easter weekend pottering in his garden at Huntingdon can do. Mr Major likes his garden. In the past two years he and the gardener have planted 8,000 bulbs.

Students of Majorism (a *style, not a doctrine*) have seen it all before. He can be peevish, thin-skinned and mean, the face he so often shows at prime minister's question time, quick to resort to cheap sneers at opponents who have landed a telling blow. It is this John Major who petulantly calls cabinet Euro-dissidents "bastards" in private — but does not rein them in. You could catch an echo of it on the Today programme yesterday.

At times like this he is what Sellars and Yeatman, satirical authors of 1066 And All That, would have called John the Bad. All their Bad Kings went around exempting everyone from taxes ("except the Common People"), likewise from arbitrary arrest ("except the Common People"). On that reading John the Bad does the same and is doomed to die of a surfeit — as Bad Kings always do in 1066 And All That — in his case a surfeit of sleazeballs on May 1.

But there is also John the Good, charming, attentive, alert to mood and detail, the politician whose effectiveness in small groups surprises strangers. "I thought he was *delightful*," gushed a reporter who recently interviewed him in Downing St for the first time.

We caught a sustained glimpse of John the Good on Mr Major's tour of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan in January. The weather was good, the workload modest, the people friendly. The prime minister was positively serene. Far from avoiding us at the back of the plane, the working press could scarcely get rid of him. No decent stories, but no sulks either.

Has he given up? we asked each other. No is the answer. But he does have one unassailable cause for serenity that his rivals lack. If he loses badly, the Brixton Boy will still have been prime minister for six years, five months and four days. He will be blamed for much, but so will his increasingly unmanageable party after 18 years of unbroken office.

We know the Cabinet has contemplated this option because last summer both John Major and Malcolm Rifkind were caught telling audiences that the Tories faced their worst election defeat "this century" if they didn't pull themselves together.

"This century" is code for the cataclysmic defeat of January 1906 when the Conservatives, led by aristo-intellectual Arthur Balfour, dropped from 402 MPs to 157, while the Liberals and their new Labour allies leapt from 186 to 430.

To find an even more traumatic defeat you must go back to 1846-7 when the Tories split over repeal of the Corn Laws, which protected British agriculture from cheap imports, and were crippled for a generation.

Some weak-kneed Tories really do believe they will be reduced to 40 seats, though that is unlikely to happen in the British system.

If Mr Major manages to close the gap significantly, rendering the Blair premiership vulnerable to events and to a revived Tory Party, it will stand greatly to his credit in the years ahead. He may by then have stepped aside at a time of his own choosing ("when people least expect it"), certainly not next month after delivering the leadership to an un-bastard. He will still be just 54.

And if he wins against all odds? Norma Major says they haven't yet ordered the Pickfords van. But even with modest encouragement from yesterday's Guardian/ICM poll (the one Fleet Street poll the Tories rate; they use ICM themselves), it seems barely credible.

Twenty points adrift in most polls for two years, viscerally divided over Europe, unable to shake off sleaze or get its share of the credit for the current economic recovery. A fatally weak leader of a party which is already maneouvring to elect his successor, aided by a scornful and disloyal Tory press. Surely not?

Probably not, is a safer way to put it. But you would be surprised how cautious many Labour analysts are in private as well as for public consumption. Voters feel it too.

What makes Tony Blair "the eternal warrior against complacency" makes Major and his inner circle in Downing Party and Conservative Central Office cling to hope. "Thirty-five per cent of voters are still undecided," say aides. Yes, but how do they explain the 73 per cent turnout in the Wirral South byelection, Major's last badly-judged poll? Doesn't it prove that the project is now "Let's Get This Lot Out at All Costs"?

No, they say. The economy is booming ("a controllable boom," asserts Ken Clarke) and the budget's income tax cuts take effect this week. Support for New Labour is wide, but shallow. There is no *enthusiasm* as there was for Harold Wilson in 1964. It is thin stuff and Labour is busy hosing down residual expectations, the absence of any belief in progress being central to the post-modern condition.

YET Major, who is doggedly stubborn, actually believes he deserves to win this time. In 1992 he was a new face, "kinder and gentler" than Thatcher's, as George Bush said about post-Reagan America. But there was a recession under way, the NHS was in internal market turmoil, the poll tax was a fresh memory.

Only now can he turn to his real ambition: social reform, education, pensions, health — all Mrs Thatcher's weak points and designed to open up society's opportunity for the have-nots, the "hard-working classes".

Living standards are higher for everyone, he tells colleagues. Britain today is a better place than in 1990, let alone 1979. Surely voters won't risk voting Labour? Hence the little ray of sunshine which penetrated Tory HQ last week when, two days running, they put Labour on the backfoot over the *details* of its plans for the unions — until sleaze resurfaced.

Details. Though he often takes casual liberties with the facts (Britain does *not* have the strongest economy in Europe, Germany does) John Major sees details as his strong point and Labour's weakness: on Europe, on devolution, on Lords reform, on tax and spending, even Northern Ireland, if pushed. That was why he was willing to risk a TV debate. A Labour gaffe is what John Major prays for.

Gaffe or no, Mr Major knows he has a mountain to climb in four weeks. But he clings to the hunch that Blairite New Labour is less of a problem for him than the "time for a change" mood — the sheer fact of 18 years in power. "It is time for a change, time for a change to the next phase of Conservative prosperity that will give everyone more choice, more control over their own lives," he said at yesterday's manifesto launch.

It seems an outrageous claim if one considers the past five years. He is a leader "in office, but not in power" according to Norman Lamont, "weak, weak, weak" according to Tony Blair and unable to impose his authority even on Piers Merchant, let alone in a cabinet which — in effect — deposed Thatcher in 1990 and picked the least dominant of the colleagues on offer.

If pragmatic British Toryism boils down to competent, undoctrinaire government then Major and his more-or-less-loyal allies, Heseltine, Clarke, Rifkind and the rest can claim to have restored a semblance of it after five chaotic years, 1989-93. What he cannot seem to do is impose his leadership on his party, the errant media or the country at large.

Europe is the most clear-cut and damning example of the weakness of his style, inevitably the bit he so comprehensively fails to grasp. Under pressure from the Right, egged on by Jimmy Goldsmith, he trims to the right, alienating Helmut Kohl and Ted Heath. Yet his balancing act prevents him from going the whole hog against the single currency and every time Malcolm Rifkind tries to move the goalpost under cover of darkness, up pops Ken Clarke on the Today programme next morning to move it back again.

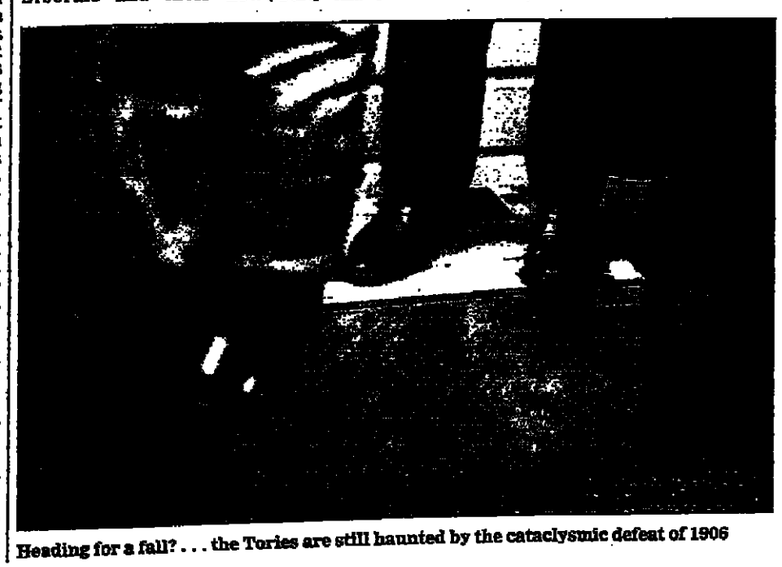
The protracted Tory Euro-crisis is strikingly similar to the fatal drift which brought down the indecisive Arthur Balfour in 1903-06, with advocates of imperial free trade (ie protectionism) playing the Euro-sceptic role, convinced they had the key to victory when it was actually the road to electoral ruin.

Plenty of Tory rightwingers will hurl that at Major if he loses badly. But others will insist he had no choice, pointing to that earlier crisis in 1846 when Sir Robert Peel's bold, intransigent stand in favour of free trade (echoes of the battleground in 1997) which decisively split the party. A tactician, not a strategist, the Major years have kept the party together — albeit at great cost.

Not even the result, not even a win, will resolve the controversy which has hamstrung the Tories, though Mr Major will be able to take comfort from a thread of continuity with those two great crises: in both the ancient House Cecil played a central role, as does its current standard-bearer, Lord Cranborne, Leader of the Lords, next Marquess of Salisbury, Official Major Chum and election chief of staff at Number Ten.

For no other reason, Lord Cranborne's presence guarantees that Mr Major knows how big the historical stakes are, in the same way that Tony Blair knows because the Lib-Lab elder statesman, Roy Jenkins, has been guiding the Labour leader's reading list.

The Tory split in 1846 helped make the 19th century a non-Conservative one. The Lib-Lab schism which was the worm in the bud of the great victory of 1906 helped make this one an overwhelmingly Tory century. Blair's long-term aim is to reverse that verdict. Major will not let him do it without a fight.



Heading for a fall? . . . the Tories are still haunted by the cataclysmic defeat of 1906

There is a John the Bad and a John the Good. One is peevish, thin-skinned and mean, the face he so often shows at prime minister's question time. The other is charming, attentive, alert to mood and detail, sometimes positively serene

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Simply more of the same

A manifesto which has learned nothing from history

EVEN today, the launch of the party election manifestos is a defining moment. Ideological divisions within late 20th century society may be less sharply drawn. Clarity about the proper role of the state and of government may be confused. The quality of political culture may be less than ideal, presentation more important than substance, and political pledges vague or cautious to a fault. All these imperfections are undoubtedly reflected in our modern parties. And yet the publication of their manifestos, for all their defects, is still a moment which matters. It does so because, however inadequately, it offers the people a choice.

Here are four tests for an election manifesto. Is it based on good principles? Does it tell a truthful story about the past? Does it offer a convincing explanation of the present? And can one have confidence in its programme for the future? Later this week these tests must be applied to the manifestos of the opposition parties, but John Major's Conservative manifesto, launched yesterday, falls short on every one.

Unlike his predecessor Mr Major has never paraded himself as an ideologue. His principles are confused and confusing, and this manifesto embodies them. Mr Major sometimes seems happiest being nostalgic for the world of One Nation Toryism, which he extolled again yesterday. Yet at other times he is proud to be the standard-bearer of the counter-revolution of the 1980s, which swept One Nation Toryism away altogether. Mr Major can never resolve this dilemma, which has dominated his premiership. He may like to sound inclusive, another word he used approvingly yesterday, but this manifesto remains in thrall to the illusions of the 1980s.

The document claims that since 1979 Britain has been transformed into the best place in the world in which to live. If only. Inequalities of wealth and opportunity have widened since 1979, with consequences that can be seen on every crumbling estate or huddled every night in West End shop doorways. Public services on which people depended, that they identified with and were proud of, and which transformed the life-chances of the disadvantaged, have been squandered in favour of a hedonistic private affluence which has had no trickle-down effect and which inevitably hurts the less well-off first, worst and longest. The new manifesto indulges itself with Thatcherite phrases like "the state must get out of the way of the wealth creators", which may have enthused people in the 1980s. But in the 1990s, people better understand what follows from such rabid economic liberalism. Their sense of security, financial and emotional as well as physical, has deteriorated in ways which would have seemed inconceivable a generation ago.

Yet the manifesto's only answer to these consequences is that the policies which caused them should be repeated. Its answer to the problems caused by transport privatisation is to privatise transport again — a triumph of dogma over experience. Its answer to the deterioration of educational security and the re-emergence of a two nation school system is to change the system once more and encourage further division. Its answer to the problems caused by low taxation is to cut (or pretend to cut) taxes again — even though the Government's own figures show that this is not a serious option. Mr Major tried to compare yesterday's Conservative manifesto with the radical Tory prescriptions of 1979. But he drew the wrong conclusion from the comparison. In 1979 the British people looked for change from a system which had failed, and rejected the party which foolishly offered them more of the same. In 1997 they have the chance to do so again.

Behold this new shrinking state

Not a springboard, not even a safety net, but Poor Law Relief

NOT SINCE HE set out his goal of a classless society in his 1990 Tory leadership bid has John Major been more ambitious. Yesterday's message from the Prime Minister at the launch of the Conservative manifesto could not have been more unequivocal: "We wish to make haves of the have-nots". This was to be achieved by getting wealth and welfare to walk hand in hand. The aim was "to replace the false security of dependence with the real security of independence". Few progressives would want to quarrel with that goal. All parties now talk of making welfare a hand-up rather than a hand-out. All want to turn the welfare state from a safety net into a trampoline. But as outlined yesterday, most of the have-nots would not be hitting a springboard from which they could launch into independence but rather slipping past a safety net into nineteenth century Poor Law relief.

The untrumpeted Tory aim yesterday was designed for the already better-off. About two million families with dependent children — or caring for elderly or disabled relatives — would benefit from the proposed transferable tax allowance but these are all families with someone in work. There was nothing for the real have-nots — the shameful proportion of families with people of working age where there is no-one in work. They now account for 20 per cent of all families. Nor was there anything for the 23 per cent of families headed by a single parent or for the almost 40 cent of children born to parents who are not married. Worse still, compare the £17.50 a week which married couples with one taxpayer would gain from yesterday's package — including big city lawyers or accountants on top rate tax — with the withdrawal of two separate one parent benefits beginning next April. Far from helping these have-nots, they are losing two benefits.

The manifesto endorses the white paper moves made earlier this year to privatise the welfare state. People should no longer expect to turn to the state under the Tories but look to private insurance to cover their longterm nursing costs and pension needs instead. In this new shrinking state, even social services would find most of its services privatised. There is a respectable leftwing argument — put most cogently by Frank Field — for a restructured welfare state under which all people would have compulsory insurance so that their contributions would remain safe from ministerial spending raids. But yesterday's package is of a quite different hue. There are no comprehensive schemes here, merely supplementary cover for the better-off. The pension proposals would leave the poor worse off while the longterm nursing plan merely protects inheritances. There is nothing here for the have-nots and even the better-off could find themselves worse off. Doubters should ask the 1.5 million people who switched from occupation to private pensions. They lost stability, security and cash.

An everyday tale of Eddie

Why landlords should not go the whole hog

THE GRUNDY family are not ideal neighbours. They indulge in sloppy farming practices, untrimmed hedges, run car boot sales and have scrap cars and machinery littering up the countryside. Yet listeners to the Archers, or so the BBC tells us, have firmly sided with the Grundys against the abrasive landlord Simon Pemberton who wants them evicted. Even the sainted Anna Ford was driven to Tynanesque language to describe Mr Pemberton on the Today programme. Perhaps it is feckless Eddie Grundy's long suffering wife Clarrie who most of all keeps Radio Four's audience figures soaring.

Fortunately for real farming folk these battles in the countryside are rare, with 95 per cent of disputes between landlord and tenant being resolved by agreement. There were only 56 Mr Pembertons last year who rejected negotiation and went to an Agricultural Lands Tribunal for a ruling against tenants, and only three who went the whole hog and demanded eviction. The catalyst for the showdown was the burning down of the cow byre: Mr Pemberton blamed the Grundys and wants compensation. True to the Archers' original purpose of educating farmers through fiction, the current saga provides lots of lessons — not least for landlords to avoid over-hasty use of the law. The three steps of "asking, persuading and instructing" tenants into better ways usually work better than a courtroom battle. And if Mr Pemberton were really so efficient, why didn't he insure the cow byre?

The tribunal hearings are expected to keep the Archers audience agog all week, with the decision on the Grundys' future being made on air on Friday. Listeners can meanwhile take comfort in the knowledge that scriptwriters are unlikely to write into oblivion the nation's favourite radio family.

Letters to the Editor

Teachers in class action

YOUR Leader on Labour's approach to education was as predictable as it was unedifying (April 1). The point is surely nothing to do with whether testing, inspecting or improving standards are appropriate — of course they are. But that is a long way from arguing, as you and the Labour Party appear to do, that the only way to respond to these is to accept most of the changes of the last nine years.

Surely, no one in their right mind would ever plan to arrive at today's education system. Who would knowingly design a divided and divisive structure, within which teachers work to a stress-inducing cocktail of over-regulation (the national curriculum, Oftsed) and anarchic, competitive and anti-social de-regulation (LMS, Grant Maintained Status, national competition for grants)?
Hugh Williams.
69 Woodfield Road,
Birmingham B13 9UL.

JUST how does the ICM/NUT poll show that the "far left faction" is out of touch? Are you suggesting that we on the left do not vote? Or is it more likely that we will be inclined to support the Labour or Liberal Democrat parties in any poll, despite their leanings to the right, than to vote for those even further to the right or waste our votes as the 4 per cent "don't knows and others"?

May I suggest that the latter interpretation of the poll results is more logical than that in your Leader.
David Harbour.
Hundayfield Cottages,
Marton-cum-Grafton,
York YO5 9QT.

BY what mandate does the NUT seek to force a democratically elected government to change national policy on education (Teachers issue strike ultimatum to Labour, March 31)?

It is the business of trade unions to defend and promote the professional interests of their members. An argument for industrial action could legitimately be made in regard to class sizes and national-curriculum tests because of their impact on a teacher's ability to teach, but not because they derive from policies with which the NUT disagrees.

Government policy on selection and the retention or otherwise of grammar schools is not a legitimate area for such action.

The NUT does have a right to to voice the concerns of its members about the impact of government policy on education. Teachers observe, day by day, the good and the bad consequences of government policies; we and the Government should listen carefully to what they have to say.

Incidentally, I find the reference to "defending [NUT] members *and their schools*" (my italics) somewhat misleading: NUT members, as far as I am aware, do not share in any way in the ownership of state schools. If these belong to anyone, they belong to us, the taxpayers; teachers are employees and the schools their places of work.
Beryl Jones.
43 Rosebank Road,
London W7 2EW.

IT is sad to see that your view of the NUT conference is still stuck in the same old time warp. Twenty years ago when I first attended conference the left was dominated by those who were genuinely politically motivated, who saw confrontation with government as an end in itself and employed the infiltration of trade unions as a major strategy toward this end. This is no longer the case.

The left owes its present level of support to the fact that a vast majority of teachers believe that a state education system which operates to the benefit of the children of ordinary people is only viable if the Government's education "reforms" are rendered ineffective.
Norman F Jones.
515 Manchester Road,
Manchester M34 2PF.

Hooked: the children at the mercy of pimps and pushers

MAY I add to your article about children taking heroin (Drugs push children to live by prostitution, March 29)? Out of 89,813 young people who contacted ChildLine for the first time in 1995/6, 835 said their main problem was drug abuse. Of these, 62 said they had taken heroin; another 19 children and two adults were worried about other young people who had taken it.

The youngest caller who said she had taken heroin was 11 but some older children claimed to have started taking it when they were 10 or 11. *Most callers did not tell us* how old they were; of those who did, the largest age group were 14 to 18 years old. Two girls and one boy had turned to prostitution to finance their habit; some stole (some from their own families, while some shoplifted). One young girl spoke of waking up and finding that she had had sex with strangers. Another had run up a debt she could not pay and her dealer was trying to blackmail her into having sex with him and others, by threatening to tell her parents what she was up to if she refused. Some were spending their generous allowances on heroin.

Some said they had taken heroin because of peer pressure but some had problems at home. Although those who called us were generally desperate for help in giving up heroin, they often seemed unaware of the assistance available from their family doctors, local drugs projects and specialist helplines. One child sought reassurance that the doctor would keep what she told him confidential. Young people who had not told their parents sometimes said it was because they were too ashamed, while others were afraid of being thrown out.
Wendy Toms.
ChildLine,
Royal Mail Building,
Studd Street,
London N1 0QW.

WHAT is disturbing is the Government's unwillingness to fund services which could prevent young people falling into the hands of the adults who exploit them.

At present there are only four refuges in the whole country for young runaways. These are safe houses where runaways under 16 can stay for a limited period at a secret address with support from professional staff. Three of these refuges are run and funded by the Children's Society. The refuges receive no support from central government while hard-pressed authorities contribute less than 10 per cent of the £1 million a year it takes to run them.

This seems at best an arbitrary way to deal with young people at risk. Until this gap is filled some young people will inevitably end up in the hands of pimps and pushers. Perhaps politicians brave enough to step back from the more populist issues in this election could take note.
Ian Sparks.
Chief executive,
The Children's Society,
Edward Rudolf House,
Margery Street,
London WC1X 0JL.

Restricted view

CHANNEL 5 is becoming expensive for me. Unable to read five columns of reduced-print TV listings instead of four, I need to buy glasses — at £15 for an eye test, and who knows how much for glasses. I haven't even tuned into Channel 5.
Ann Evander.
4 Beach Road,
Dovercourt, Essex CO12 3RP.

FOLLOWING your correspondence about newsreaders' nightmares (Letters, March 26, 27, 28); when Harold Macmillan was recuperating after a major operation, the news announcer reported him "up early this morning on the golf course, where he played a round with Lady Dorothy".
Graham Holden.
9 Bramble Close,
Budleigh Salterton,
EX9 6JS.

ANOTHER reason for Bank Holiday road congestion (Letters, March 31) is the insistence by rail operators that Summer Time does not begin until the end of May. I would gladly have used my local rail line on Easter Monday . . . but it wasn't running because the winter service was still in operation.
Graham Larkbey.
61 Hornsey Lane Gardens,
London N6 5PA.

IT is interesting that Barbara Cartland (Why I vote Conservative, April 2) claims that: "I knew Winston [Churchill] when he was a little boy". Dame Barbara was born in 1901; Churchill in 1874. How appropriate that someone with what the great man referred to as "terminological inexactitude" should vote for the party of Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith.
Robert Saunders.
13 Meard Street,
London W1V 3HQ.

GRAFFITI spotted on a wall in Lennard Road, Beckenham: "Piers Merchant is a slag".
Django Bates.
Kelsey Park Road,
Beckenham, Kent BR3 6LH.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address.

How to fiddle the dole

RECENT reports about staff in London Jobcentres being forced to "fiddle figures to boost employment statistics" will come as no surprise to staff in the Employment Service (Jobcentre staff 'intimidated into fiddling figures', March 29). The Civil and Public Services Association, which represents the majority of union members in Jobcentres, has received reports of similar scams throughout the service.

In the West Midlands staff, including managers, are under constant pressure to achieve and, where possible, exceed arbitrary targets set by senior management. In order to do so, a range of weird and wonderful initiatives has been used, including sending unemployed clients to police line-ups and counting them as "job-placings", and classifying successful bespectacled job applicants as people with disabilities.

More recently, managers were encouraged to count their own staff who find part-time work as a speculative job-placing, because they require the management's approval to do so.
Pat Lavery.
CPSA Regional Secretary,
Jobcentre, Bayard House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall WS1 1SI.

Warning: clichés at large

FROM all the journalistic clichés used by crime correspondents I am surprised Duncan Campbell missed out one of the worst offenders: *walked free from court* (It's a fair cop, March 31). This is generally used to describe any sentence which does not involve the convicted person going straight to prison — sorry, *spending his/her first night in the cells*.

What the hard-pressed journalist is usually trying to say is that the offender in question has been either absolutely or conditionally discharged, or fined, or given a supervision order or an attendance-centre order, or ordered to do up to 240 hours' labour in service to their local community.

It is little wonder that so many people think custody is the be-all and end-all of sentencing; they seldom get to hear of the other sanctions available to the courts; or *constructive community-based disposals*, as we often like to call them.
George Barrow.
Association of Chief Officers of Probation,
212 Whitechapel Road,
London E1 1BJ.

DUNCAN Campbell left a classic, er, at large. Foul play, as in: *Foul play is/ is not suspected* is a Victorian euphemism for serious crime — usually murder — which has escaped more than 100 years of sub-editorial scrutiny, or laxity. And prodnoses everywhere will be irritated by court reports which reveal that defendants invariably ask that offences be *taken into consideration* rather than be considered.
Douglas Rome.
9 Ellisland Drive,
Summerhill,
Dumfries DG2 9DZ.

A couple of Conservatives write

WITH respect to your Spotlight on Exeter (April 2), I do not attack Muslims. They have a pro-family culture which I welcome to the UK, along with other pro-family cultures. However, I do not wish to see enclaves of any fundamental culture supported by the state, and consider that all immigrant cultures have a duty to integrate with our own over time. Few Muslims would disagree and integration is a two-way process.

Secondly I do not support a minimum wage enforced by law. I do consider that any employer whose business is profitable and who pays less than four pounds an hour should be ashamed. However, to enforce a minimum wage would be to start the process of economic decline that a socialist government would make inevitable.
(Dr) Adrian Rogers.
(Conservative PPC, Exeter.)
Cranmere House,
Trews Weir Reach,
Exeter EX2 4EG.

AS a staunchly loyal Conservative fighting hard to secure John Major's return to No 10, I nevertheless must put on record how offensive I find the comments of Adrian Rogers. Whilst the people of Devon will have to rise above the personality of the candidate in favour of a voting decision based on the policies of national parties, I know that many Tories would prefer to have Ben Bradshaw's tolerance and bravery to represent their views at Westminster, rather than have their vote interpreted as an endorsement of Adrian Rogers' bigotry.

The Conservative Party I support believes in a multicultural society at ease with itself, where neither sex, race, sexuality, religion nor studying German is a barrier to success, political or otherwise.
Iain Corby.
Flat 44,
50 Roman Road,
London E2 0LT.

A Country Diary

ROYAL CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK, Nepal: Tiger Tops tented camp stands on a beautiful, forested plateau in a remote corner of the national park, with sweeping views over tall elephant grassland and the River Reu to the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas beyond. In a small clearing in the forest, our walk-in tents were huddled around a tall thatched hut with a central fireplace where we ate and discussed the day's events lit by kerosene lamps but no fences or walls — this was the jungle. Here we were living alongside a rich and diverse wildlife: Bengal tiger, leopard, gaur (the largest of the wild cattle standing up to 6ft tall at the shoulder and weighing over 20 cwt), sloth bear, Great Asian one-horned rhinoceros, four kinds of deer, two species of monkey, two types of crocodile, 450 different birds, and, unlike most wildlife parks, we could explore our surroundings on foot. Each day our local guide led us through the dense woodland carrying his long pole to deter any threatening animal whilst we found a suitable tree to climb — guns are barred in the park. The most dangerous animal we could have encountered was the sloth bear — a long-snouted, furry beast equipped with wickedly curved claws, and possessing a completely unpredictable temperament, but we only found its footprints. Throne horned rhinoceros was another source of danger but we took the precaution of crossing its territory in the tall grasslands on the back of a *docile Indian elephant* which gave us superb, close-up views. The prehistoric rhino is also anti-social and unpredictable, the male often reaching the size of the average family saloon, but its armour-plated skin hides a small brain and terrible eyesight which has on occasion led it to charge trees and stationary vehicles.

J M THOMPSON

Diary

Matthew Norman

CONCERN mounts once again for the wellbeing of my friend Peter Bottomley. Last Thursday, on Abingdon Green (that little strip of grass opposite Parliament), Bumley was observed giving an eccentric twist to a cherished London custom. Appoaching a Japanese tourist, Bumley asked the visitor to take a snap of him standing in front of Big Ben. The photo duly taken, the tourist returned a camera to Bumley, who bowed graciously and said: "Thank you. You are very kind." Alas, Bumley was not in cordial mood when we called, first putting the phone down, and then, when rung back, admitting part of the incident but batily insisting it was the tourist who asked him to pose — a request, he implied, made by Japanese visitors to SW1 with wearying frequency. "You've asked me if I have asked a Japanese tourist to take my picture," he said, when we wondered if the incident might be some bizarre Bumley version of satire. "I've said to you once I did not ask a Japanese tourist to take my picture. You are now asking me subsequent questions on the basis that I did." Very strange.

GIVEN his pin-up status among them, Bumley may well be invited to star in a video being made in Tokyo advising Japanese tourists how to bathe when abroad. This is in response to the collapse of a hotel ceiling in Australia due to weight of bath water. "It's putting a severe strain on our drainage system," says Martin Chamber of, the AHA Hotel in Surfers's Paradise, of the Japanese penchant for thrashing around in overfilled baths.

THE scent of reconciliation with rapid-rebuttal superstar Oofy Wegg-Prosser, which hung tantalisingly upon the breeze two days ago, has been blown away. By sheer chance, the Diary answered the phone on Tuesday when he rang to speak to a colleague, and the ensuing conversation — the first since the legendary soup incident, when we quoted his rejection ("no, thank you") of the offer of broth — was good natured. However, deafening silence greeted all attempts to page the little chap, and when we intercepted another call to that colleague, his tone was icy. Oofers, old man, loosen up. Life's too short for feuds.

UPHOLDING one of our more ancient General Election traditions, Tory Central Office has been busy recruiting the dimmest upper-class young women from the dregs of the worst finishing schools in Switzerland. Early reports from news conferences suggest typical form. Having just given Jonathan Dimbleby's badge to his brother David, one of them asked the next hack in line for his details. He gave his name, and stated his employer as the BBC. "And what is your Christian name, Mr Paxman?" said the gel.

TERRY Waite's refusal to stand as Tatton's anti-sleaze candidate adds to the Diary's already near intolerable workload. There was no answer yesterday from our first choice — Mad Frank Fraser will appear tomorrow, we hope, endorsing Welcome to HM Prison, a fine exhibition of art by former inmates at Brighton's Corn Exchange on Saturday — so we turned wearily to Michael Winner. "Why haven't they asked me?" said Michael, who is ready to declare himself under the Jumbo Knickers banner. "I know John Major well. Why has he not called? I am ready. My clean shirt is ready and I shall wear my Downing College tie." In the absence of Mad Frank's agreement, Diary forecaster Steptoe may consent to choose; failing this, however, we are stuck with Michael.

IN what parenting experts will view as an important affirmation for the bonding process, Madonna is thinking of producing a sibling for Lourdes. Company magazine reports that the old girl has persuaded Carlos Leon to freeze some sperm. What makes the arrangement so touching is that, at time of freezing, he was still Madonna's boyfriend.

Major offers more of the world we know

Commentary

Hugo Young

THE Conservative manifesto deserves a lot of praise that sounds negative but is not faint. There are many things you might expect it to be which it is not. It is not out of date or out of touch. It will not seem irrelevant to the aspiring millions of Middle England. It does not miss the point, or mistake the *zeitgeist*. All this was said of the Tory manifesto the last time the party lost an election after a long period in power, in 1964, when the leader came from another age, and white heat seared the deadly verdict of anachronism into the Conservatives' reputation. The 1997 manifesto says many things that many people agree with and aspire to, including Tony Blair.

It cannot, in particular, be charged with lacking creativity. Plainly, the political energy of Conservatism has not faded, even if its ministers sometimes seem dead on their feet. The future privatising of pensions, announced a few weeks ago, was a visionary piece of radicalism, flawed though it may have been. It showed one minister, Peter Lilley, working with constructive responsibility. The new plan for spousal exchange of tax allowances, while inviting a lot of questions about what's happened over the past 10 years, is a significant social as well as economic statement. Creativity, in fact, is no longer the problem it was 30 years ago. The political world having expanded so vastly, with think-tanks and policy-wonks galore colonising Westminster, there need be no danger of ennui, if the political direction is clear.

And that is another Tory virtue. The direction is certainly clear. The famously betrayed tax promises of 1992 are in that sense a red herring. A voter trying to figure out from this document what sort of world he or she would be voting for finds a kind of easy reassurance. It will be the world as we know it, but more so. That world is more completely envisagable than the Labour world we will hear about today, when Blair launches his manifesto. After 18 years, it could hardly be otherwise.

It is also a distinctive world, in certain particulars. I think four of them are truly revealing. One: the different tax bias of a party committed to abolishing inheritance and capital taxes, as against one committed to assisting those at the bottom level of income tax. Two: the anti-unionism of one party, compared with the restoration of trade union power favoured by the other. Three: the divide over Europe's influence on Britain's social order, and Britain's place in Europe. Four: a huge variance over the constitution, on which the Tories' claim to be a reforming party will rest, we now learn, on making parish councils (I kid you not) the building blocks of change, together with yet more attacks on local authority control over anything that matters, particularly education.

There are differences between the Tory and Labour worlds, but they're no longer huge or many. Trust is another matter

You may not like all or any of this world. But, as far as it goes, it offers a choice, not just between directions but between policies. When the Liberal Democrats come into the frame tomorrow, some of the choices will become clearer still, since the Lib Dems are prepared to be a good deal more categoric than Labour about the pain as well as the pleasure inherent in their programme.

However, there are limits to this clarity. Manifestoes go on longer than they used to, but still say less. The Tory document is a glossy prospectus for UK plc, with state-of-the-art imagery and presentation, rich in mission statements and fine-tuned records of performance and defences of the case for continuity, but it doesn't tell the full story. At crucial moments it lapses into the vagueness and bluster that have become, on all sides, a substitute for hard promise.

Real promises, in fact, are few and cautious. We know the direction of tax reform, but every word about tax cutting is couched as an aspiration conditional on unforeseeable developments. Labour will sound much the same. Most of the hard-edged promises the Tories make are, in fact, negative: not to devolve power, not to sign the social chapter, not to reform the Lords, not to pass any single-currency enabling laws in the first Parliament.

Positive specifics aren't entirely absent: a national ("voluntary") ID card; and outlawing public sector strikes, were two that caught my dyspeptic eye. But much of this stuff concerns ends not means, painless aims not verifiable pledges.

It also has less to do with objective assertions than purely subjective claims. On public spending, which both main parties promise to hold down, the Tories simply ask us to believe they'll be tougher than the Labour Party. This is because their "instincts" are sounder, notwithstanding a record that says otherwise.

It's the same with tax. All these aspirational commitments, which prudently fall short of undertakings, leave the puzzled citizen less than fully informed about what life will really be like if the single-party universe of Major's dreams comes to pass.

The greatest hole of this kind is Europe. Reading the Tory manifesto, you'd imagine there wasn't a trace of disagreement in the party. The emollient phrases, promising to reject federalism while waiting to see about the single currency, may be necessary policy-speak, but in this case they amount to a flat lie, if what they're supposed to convey is the impression that a Conservative government would have any capacity to conduct a Europe policy in the national interest without tearing itself apart. What the Tories claim, as with tax and spending, is to have a stiffer spine than Labour, bracing them against the scheming continentals. In fact, they cloak in bland, deceiving silence what would become the earliest reason why the country was forced to regret having elected a Tory government.

This is the limitation of the Tory manifesto, as it will be of the others. A manifesto doesn't tell you much the non-specifics of politics. It can't say who will in fact run a tighter economy, or fight a better corner in Brussels. Its blusterings and aspirations are to be read against the most elusive abstraction of all, for which no glossiness or creativity can substitute. This is the quality of trust. Whom do you trust to do what they all say they want to do? The further the specifics recede, the closer the party and its leaders loom. The less we hear of ideology, the more we focus on reliability. There are differences between the Tory and Labour worlds, but they're no longer huge or many.

Trust is another matter. There the gap is a chasm, and pledges will never cross it.

Move over Marx – Disraeli's the new Labour icon

Ian Aitken

IT used to be said of the Labour Party, and with some justice, that its existence owed more to Methodism than to Marx. Its stolid trade-union founders were godly men in the main, and overwhelmingly nonconformist by upbringing. They may have waged class war in practice, but few of them subscribed to it as a creed.

True, there were episodes in the Labour Party's history when it looked as if Marxism might be gaining on Methodism. Such moments coincided broadly with periods when either the Communist Party or one or other of several Trotskyist factions were pursuing a policy of "entryism", with the comical aim of transforming the party of Bevin and Attlee into an instrument of proletarian revolution.

The most successful of these undercover invasions of Labour's grass roots was mounted by the Militant Tendency in the mid-1980s, and was only brought to an end by the determination of Neil Kinnock. But party folklore records several earlier occasions when the Communists successfully colonised innocent Labour branches by sheer hard work. Indeed, when one such entryist drive was suddenly called off after a Kremlin change of line, the ward officers of virtually every constituency party in North London turned out to have been undercover Bolshies all along. It may have been daft, but it gave everyone outside Labour headquarters a good laugh at the time.

But thanks to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the old Communist Party has been replaced by a tiny sect cheekily calling itself the Democratic Left. Some ex-Coms may well have joined the Labour Party, but as penitents rather than as entryists. Meanwhile, the Militant Tendency has committed a different kind of suicide by "coming out" as a separate political party which will lose lots of deposits.

As a long-standing resident of Highgate, I can testify to the implosion of Marxism. Until quite recently, one was constantly being asked for directions to the cemetery where the great sage lies. The enquirers included not only Russians, East Europeans and Chinese but also Frenchmen, Germans, Italians and Spaniards. There were also many Brits, speaking in those tortured "proletarian" accents affected by middle-class trots. As you would expect, we still get plenty of Chinese. But there are few other pilgims. Most of those asking for directions want to savour the cemetery's bizarre gothic tombstones, not to commune with the ideological ghost whose -ism shaped the history of our century.

But if Labour has finally counted Marx out, Methodism doesn't seem to have triumphed either. True, God has regained a foothold in the Labour Party, with the Christian Socialist Movement claiming a fivefold increase in its membership since 1993. But Mr Blair, whose public emphasis on his Christian faith has clearly precipitated this rather creepy mass conversion, is no nonconformist. He is a high Anglican halfway on the road to Rome, who cheerfully sends his son to a sternly Catholic school.

So who or what is to be New Labour's inspiration? Earlier this week, Mr Blair gave us a hint when he daringly claimed that Labour and not the Tories were now the One Nation party. Can it be that Benjamin Disraeli, creator of "one nation" Conservatism, and patron saint of the anti-Thatcherite Tory "wets", is to become the new icon of the post-Marxist Labour Party?

If so, don't be too quick to mock it. For Dizzie, an admirer of Byron, was *no* Gradgrind Thatcherite; on the contrary, he believed passionately in the duty of the rich to ensure the wellbeing of the poor. After 18 years of the opposite, that would be no bad start for a New Labour government under a godly prime minister. The rest can wait till later.

THE very first speaker at the meeting of the Beckenham Conservative Association which considered the future of their MP and prospective candidate, Piers Merchant, won tumultuous applause with a couple of sentences which would have gone down equally well a few months ago at a Labour Party meeting. I am told that he began: "What is at stake here isn't what our MP did or did not do in his private life; it is the democratic process itself. The question is, are we going to allow our choice of candidate to be dictated by Rupert Murdoch and the editor of the Sun?"

This ringing declaration apparently set the tone of the meeting, and thereby ensured a reprieve for Mr Merchant. But what a change since 1992, when it was the Sun wot won it for Mr Merchant, among others. It would be a real giggle if the voters of Beckenham accepted the Sun's advice for a second time, and threw Mr Merchant out again.

If so, one wonders if that would be a threat to the democratic process, too? To adapt a phrase familiar to most Tories: Never in the course of electoral history has so much depended on the Daily Telegraph.

Private education is the election issue that dare not speak its name (except at a dinner party near you), argues **Rachel Cusk**

Don't mention it

AS Tony Blair has said of his three priorities for power, there's education, education and education. There's the education you buy. There's the education you make, out of a bit of research and a clever house-move. And there's the education you're given. Mr Blair will be trying to fit all three through the door of 10 Downing Street — even though until only a few years ago the Labour Party promised it would leave private education out with the dustbins. Were it to be pointed out to him that the door, even after the trimming away of the Assisted Places Scheme, isn't wide enough for all three, we can be assured that still none of his priorities will be left outside. Costly and illogical though it might seem, the door will just have to be made wider.

The debate about private education has, it seems, itself been privatised. The sector's unfairness and iniquity have been overlooked in this campaign. It is the hot potato of the dinner party rather than the political platform, a moral chaser to both the warm beer of the provincial Tory and the champagne socialism of the middle-class liberal. You may have no more intention of sending your child to a state school than you have of going to prison, but as a taxpayer — and don't forget, when it comes to education you paid them *twice!* — you have a great big say in the choice of social wallpaper.

It has been pointed out, most notably and volubly by the retiring Tory MP George Walden, that the two- and increasingly three-tiered engineering miracle of our education system might in fact conceal the recondite social woodworm of intolerance, an infestation of which perhaps we believe ourselves to have been long since cured.

The small, noisy but assiduously courted percentile of taxpayers who also have nothing at stake have until now felt they had no more idea of where their money was going than if they'd put a coin in a box for Africa. Furthermore, teaching, a career already regarded by graduates as the penultimate resort, demands in addition a missionary selflessness to go the full mile to the last resort of the state sector, a career decision on a par with voluntary martyrdom. Mr Blair's talk of the many and the few — as in, we intend to give to the many what in the past was available only to the few — merely relocates the arguments on the other side of the chasm. It does nothing to bridge it, and indeed it ought not to be bridged. It ought to be filled in, or left to fend for itself, an interesting social colony where the purchase of superiority provides a breeding ground for endlessly reproducing heirarchies.

It is convenient for the private education system that at the one time in recent history in which it ought to feel mildly threatened it should be rescued by the white knight of injustice: consumerism. That education can be bought protects it, according to our whizzkid grasp of our rights as consumers, from being taken away. The nature of precisely *what* is being purchased has changed, too. Private schools merely exist. If they didn't, no one would bother to invent them. What began as the institutionalised British fear of sentiment — sand your child away to be depersonalised, to have your biological connection beaten out of him and social fitness beaten in at a fee-paying borstal — has become an expensive indulgence in it. Only the best for my child. What else could I do? You tell me.

THE stock political arguments for abolishing private schools are as slim as their chances of being so. The incursions usually suggested are also relatively pointless. Removing their charitable status would merely make them more expensive — and hence more élitist — while at the same time discouraging them from practices which actually *are* charitable. The same can be said of imposing VAT on school fees. At least Labour's commitment to abolish the Assisted Places Scheme will have some effect, contributing as it does to the perceived desirability of private schools, and of state schools as places from which it is necessary for clever children to escape.

A Mori study found that while 71 per cent of group A and B parents — that swotty lot — were aware of the scheme, only 29 per cent of D and E parents knew of it. Only 14 per cent of pupils on the scheme have working-class or unemployed parents.

The debate about the three Es — education, education and education — is a debate not for those who govern a society, but for the society itself. We need to ask why we persist in separating ourselves, what it is we so fear in each other, what stops us taking the "them" out of "us and them".

If we so deplore the state system, then why consign 93 per cent of children to it? If we don't, then why are we buying ours places on the lifeboat? It only gives rise to rumours that the ship is sinking — and we are, after all, in it together.

Rachel Cusk's third novel, The Country Life (Picador), will be published in June

What the UN war is all about

Ian Black on why diplomats are losing their virginity on the streets of New York

FORGET global trade wars, the collapsing Middle East peace process, Nato expansion or even the glittering cocktail parties you see in those Ferrero-Rocher ads: what diplomats *care* about is ... their parking space.

Exaggerated? Not if you are from one of the 185 governments represented in the steel and glass tower on New York's East River, where the UN General Assembly could soon be holding an emergency debate on the Big Apple's draconian new parking regulations.

As the world burns, diplomatic caution has been abandoned over the right to park unmolested by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's tow-away policy. Hell knoweth no fury like a country with its privileges threatened. Nuclear-armed France, snug in its permanent Security Council seat, is pursuing its perks with all the reticence of a runaway TGV, even hinting that the UN could well set up in Geneva or Vienna if Manhattan can't handle the CD-plate abusers. Brazil's José Eduardo Martins Felicio, no less furious, protested that "diplomatic immunity is like virginity: either you have it or you have not".

Sir Henry Wooton, who famously failed to amuse King James with the remark that an ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for the good of his country, would have recognised the slick, mendacious style. For many diplomats feel that defying the NYPD, or indeed Westminster Council, is not an automatic right under the Vienna Convention but an abuse that brings their much-maligned trade into greater disrepute.

"Its silly and this shows exactly why the UN is a laughing stock," said one senior American. "One of the things that diplomats want to do is engender goodwill in the country they're posted to — and you don't do that by stiffing local laws or procedures."

Most diplomats admit to enjoying their privileges — usually including duty-free cigarettes, booze and tax exemptions — but accept that these should not extend to blocking pavements or escaping fines. Not that some don't whinge: the special relationship betwen London and Washington is marred by a spat that means our chaps in Washington can't avoid state sales tax as long as the guys in Grosvenor Square have to pay VAT.

AND Foreign Office protocol types have more serious worries: like the Middle Eastern ambassador found with guns in his car boot. Diplomats have been caught smuggling drugs, engaging in fraud, even kidnapping, but in the UK mundane things like shoplifting and drunk-driving are more frequent: in 1995 there were 28 cases where diplomatic immunity was not lifted. But HMG then expects those who claim it to go home — and face the wrath of governments less tolerant than the British courts.

Civilisations *do* clash over that rectangle of Tarmac: at the top of the parking-violations list, in Washington and London, are the Nigerians, currently facing a good deal of international ill-will — though nothing as unsubtle as sanctions — over human-rights abuses.

In Britain, India and Ghana come second and third, undaunted by the FO's clever habit of shaming violators by giving the list of annual diplomatic parking fines to Parliament — though this year's has fallen victim, like Sir Gordon Downey's sleaze report, to prorogation.

True Brit psychology works. Back in 1985 there were 45,000 outstanding fines; in 1994, just 3,613. Last year they were down to 1,586 with penalties totalling £11,600 paid in three months. Fewer Ferrero-Rocher choccies, maybe. But less shame too.

Ian Black is the Guardian's diplomatic editor

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Rupert Lockwood

Key to an Australian drama

Rupert Lockwood at court during the Petrov affair

RUPERT Lockwood, who has died aged 88, was an Australian journalist and writer who played a key part in one of the dramatic moments of the cold war as it impinged on his country — he was a key witness in the Royal Commission set up by Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1954 to investigate Soviet espionage, popularly known as the Petrov Inquiry. Menzies called for the commission after the defection of Soviet diplomats Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov who were long-standing officers of the Soviet secret service, the MVD, and the first significant intelligence defectors to the West after 1945. The left regarded the inquiry as a witch hunt.

Petrov alleged that a central piece of evidence, dubbed "Document J", was written by Lockwood while he was a reporter for the Communist Party's newspaper, Tribune. Compiled for the Russians, the briefing paper detailed pre-war Japanese interests in Australia, United States intelligence in that country, and political and union matters. Such was its potential damage, counsel for the commission described it as "a farrago of fact, falsity and filth".

Lockwood claimed the document was a fabrication, particularly those pages which revealed that he had close contact with staff from the office of the Labour Party leader, Dr H V Evatt. In those McCarthyite days, such contacts with a communist journalist were regarded as politically damaging to Evatt. Evatt, a former high court judge, accepted Lockwood's denial, and donned his lawyer's garb to represent his staff at the inquiry, where he alleged a conspiracy by the Menzies government.

Lockwood's testimony before the inquiry was a masterpiece of coolness, bluff and controlled hostility toward his cross-examiner, Sir Garfield Barwick, later Australia's Chief Justice. However, the commission found that Lockwood had written the document and that its pen portraits and gossip damaged national security.

While Lockwood always maintained publicly that he was not the author of Document J, when I interviewed him for my book *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, he admitted "off the record" that he wrote every word of it and explained his false testimony by arguing that "Evatt had to be protected".

Unfortunately the testimony he had provided neatly compounded Evatt's belief that the Petrov defection was timed to influence the 1954 election — which he had lost — and was concocted by the Australian Security Intelligence Organization. Evatt's belief became part of cold war legend and was accepted by many later historians.

The son of a country newspaper editor, Lockwood attended the elite Wesley College in Melbourne. He was employed on Sir Keith Murdoch's Melbourne Herald in the depression, and reported from Singapore, London, Spain during the Civil War and later from Canberra.

Lockwood's long feud with Menzies defined his robust approach to his work and his politics. It began when Menzies, then Attorney-General, was addressing a parliamentary press gallery dinner in Canberra in 1938. Lockwood was enraged by Menzies's encouragement of the export of pig iron to Japan, which was then raining bombs down on China. Proposing a toast, Lockwood ironically hailed Menzies's solution to the problem of "the absence of iron in the Chinese diet". Shortly after, he was sacked from the Melbourne Herald.

In the late 1930s, Lockwood assisted the flight from Europe of a number of Jews and joined the Communist Party. During the war he was one of three journalists who drew up the code of ethics of the Australian Journalists' Association, which remains today. Lockwood was a communist who came from a comfortable background; he was a moving orator, intelligent and highly literate. His break with Soviet-style communism came after he worked as Moscow correspondent for Tribune in the 1960s.

In his later life he wrote a series of books of which the best, *Black Armada*, tells of the ban by waterside workers on Dutch shipping at the time of the struggle for Indonesian independence in 1947-49. He is survived by his former wife Betty Searle and their three daughters.

David McKnight

Rupert Lockwood, journalist, born March 10, 1908; died March 8, 1997

Charles Levinson

In theory and in practice

Compelling orator . . . Charles 'Chips' Levinson

AS THE impact of globalisation becomes the hottest of hot concepts, the man who can reasonably claim to have first raised the spectre of the global economy and its impact on workers has died, aged 77, in Switzerland. Charles "Chip" Levinson was one of the most influential theoreticians and practitioners of international working-class organisation of this century.

Born in Canada, this multilingual leftist cut his teeth on the sectarian battlegrounds of North American Marxism in the 1940s. Levinson was sent to Paris in 1951 by the Congress of Industrial Organisations where he worked to support non-communist trade unionism in Europe. (New material from Moscow archives now confirms that communist trade unionism in western Europe had been subsidised and guided by Moscow since 1920.)

Levinson, however, was not interested in anti-communism so much as pro-worker internationalism. He moved to Geneva in the late 1950s to work for the International Metalworkers' Federation, and then became general secretary of the International Chemical Workers' Federation. These two bodies coordinate the international union activities of millions of industrial workers around the world.

On the practical front Levinson helped develop the concept of global company councils for multinational firms, bringing together union representatives from the same enterprise in different countries to discuss their common problems. Today, British unions have more than 1,000 representatives sitting on European works councils, the indirect fruit of Levinson's pioneering work. If Levinson claimed too much in his press releases, he was nevertheless a brilliant publicist; but it was his theoretical work which was more significant.

His most important book was *Vodka-Cola* which claimed, in the détente years, that multinational capitalism would cut a deal with world communism to do down the worker. His argument was elegant and persuasive, but Levinson's residual economic determinism failed to take enough account of the demand for freedom and democracy in the communist world.

However, today's unholy alliance between multinationals and communist China may yet provide a new validity to his thesis.

Levinson was a compelling orator in English and French but a restless, driven loner. He treated his international union federation as a personal possession from which he was quietly eased under pressure from British unions in the 1980s.

He worked briefly as an international consultant for American unions and lived quietly in Geneva with his wife, an interpreter. He will deserve his place in the history of 20th century international trade union theory and practice.

Denis MacShane

Charles Levin, international trade union organiser; born January 19, 1920; died January 22, 1997

Lesley Cunliffe

Adventuress and muse

LESLEY Cunliffe was an exotic, an adventuress, a dilettante, a dandy. She died on Good Friday, aged 51, with a timing that would have appealed to her appetites for self-dramatisation and for ecstatically morbid Catholicism: she was born to that faith and had returned to it in the last five years of her life with a conviction that was all the stronger for her appreciation of its camp irreason.

She was peripatetic, a beauty, a woman of singular verve and wit who lived, in a way that has been unusual among her generation and milieu, through men: only three weeks ago she said "I don't seem to be dying quite yet — who shall I marry next?" She was muse rather than maker: she wanted to be the latter but something always got in the way. It might be her chronically low self-esteem, her fretfulness, her aptitude for too many bright ideas and too little resolve to see them through — or it might be her latest beau.

She was determinedly discriminate in her choice of men and it's appropriate that the last piece she ever published was about her precursor Barbara Skelton who entwined *inter alia*, Derek Jackson, Cyril Connolly and George Weidenfeld. But Cunliffe was not poisonous the way Skelton was, and quite lacked the seemly heartlessness which is the *sine qua non* of the career femme fatale.

She was generous to a T, a perpetual innocent and though she was not impervious to the lure of a name, she was far too easily bored to frequent any other than bohemian society. Though she often worked at such forcing grounds of straitenedly orthodox snobbery as Vogue and Tatler, she was wayward, original and airily dismissive of others' conformist hierarchies: she had her own pantheon and was loyal to it.

She was born Lesley Hume in Springfield, Massachusetts. She was farmed out for months on end to her maternal grandparents, who led a quasi-colonial life in Mexico. When she returned from one unusually long sojourn there to her school in the all-Wasp town of Bronxville, Westchester County, she had blossomed into a startling adolescent — which earned her the envious resentment of her classmates: boys, of course, reacted differently.

Her first boyfriend was John Sebastian who was later to form the Lovin' Spoonful and to compose such songs as *Younger Girl*. After a year at a liberal, progressive university in Vermont, she headed north to Alaska with her new love, Erik Saarinen (son of the architect Eero). He made films about bears. Her self-creation began in earnest, however, when she moved to England in 1971. She had met and married, as the second of his three American wives, the literary and military historian Marcus Cunliffe who more or less invented (non-uxorious) American studies in this country and held a chair at Sussex University.

He was 23 years her senior. Nine years later she was living with Craig Brown who was 12 years her junior. In between times she had suffered TB, become a thirty-something punk, shacked up in an insanitary squat. The lurch from a man in his late fifties to one in his early twenties was characteristic; so were the moves from urban boxes to bothyish cottages in the middle of piggy fields. She left Brown for Jonathan Raban. She subsequently referred to him as Rabies — out of animus rather than from homophonic playfulness.

Style and defiance . . . Lesley Cunliffe PHOTOGRAPH: VOGUE

The last protracted relationship of her life was with the cartoonist Michael Heath. It endured almost a decade and was what is called stormy — ie doting, cruel, mutually abusive, passionate, frequently conducted in a state of alcoholic extremes which, happily, turned to alcoholic oblivion the next day. Jeffrey Bernard remarked: "I wish I'd got to her first. I could have saved her from all that." But of course Lesley did not want to be saved. Eschewal of excess would have been a kind of dishonour, as would espousal of the sort of behavioural norms which she had left behind in middle America: like Princess Margaret she invariably drank whisky throughout a meal, smoked between mouthfuls, spoke her mind.

If her career was all fits and starts and false dawns, it was only because she put her talent into her life rather than into Harpers & Queen, or the Sunday Times, or the TLS, or the Evening Standard. And if her life absorbed her talent, her death occasioned a streak of genius. From soon after inoperable stomach cancer was diagnosed 16 months ago, she processed towards death with a grave curiosity and wonderfully weird stoicism: "How are we going to make this fun?"

She prepared in style, as though her demise was the culmination of a most subtle, serene and defiant work of performance art. It was inspiriting to behold so bold an act of moral dandyism, one which gave meaning to the void ahead.

Jonathan Meades

Lesley Cunliffe, journalist, born May 21, 1945; died March 28, 1997

Letter

Anne Corbett writes: When France was still under General de Gaulle's presidential sway in the early 1960s, Jean Charlot (*obituary March 27*) was a lone researcher plugging away at opinion polls. His evidence suggested that, contrary to a near-universal view, the political values of Gaullism would survive the exit of the strong man. But when the theory was put to the test, the researcher in political science was to wait as anxiously as any test tube scientist for the outcome of the experiment. The General's 1969 exit from power was widely taken to herald France's return to an anarchic past. His successor, Pompidou, did not look like a winner. So Jean awaited the outcome of the election, wondering if his book *The Gaullist Phenomenon*, by then two thirds completed, had got the story wrong. As it turned out, Pompidou's eventual victory can be seen as a triumph for a theory, giving Jean Charlot, with *The Gaullist Phenomenon*, a place in the history of ideas.

Birthdays

Alec Baldwin, actor, 39; **Prof Janet Bately**, King's College, London, 65; **Tony Benn MP**, former Labour minister, 72; **Marlon Brando**, actor, 73; **Charlotte Coleman**, actress, 29; **Doris Day**, actress and singer, 73; **Dennis Farr**, former director, Courtauld Institute Galleries, 68; **William Gaunt**, actor, 60; **Helmut Kohl**, Chancellor of Germany, 67; **Jonathan Lynn**, director, actor and author, 54; **Eddie Murphy**, actor, 36; **Charles Peattie**, cartoonist (Alex), 39; **Richard Thompson**, guitarist and songwriter, 48; **Prof Kathleen Tillotson**, English scholar and author, 91; **John Virgo**, snooker player, 51; **Sir Michael Woodruff**, surgeon, kidney transplant pioneer, 86.

Death Notices

CAPLAN, Margaret Joan (née Bray) died peacefully 29th March aged 81, deeply loved and loving wife of Isador; survived and greatly grieved by her daughters Sally, Jane and Charlotte, her grandchildren Daniel, Gideon, Jessica and Samuel, and her sister Molly. Funeral on Tuesday 8 April 1.30p.m at Mortlake Crematorium; family flowers only, donations if desired to The Alzheimer Disease Society; enquiries to Andrew Holmes & Son (0181 572 3277). Grateful thanks to everyone at Strawberry Hill Nursing Home.

GOODE Yvonne, Aged 35, died March 25th after a long battle against cancer. She overcame many obstacles to gain a degree, becoming a journalist and researcher, jazz blues singer and most importantly achieved her independence. Her sincerity, warmth, frankness, individuality, huge talent and thirst for life, and what it had to offer, made her a 'special person' and an inspiration to all who met her. She was much loved and will be sorely missed by Rupert, her family and many friends.

KELLY. Peacefully at Oxford on 31 March, Rev Dr John Norman Davidson Kelly, formerly Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford and Canon of Chichester, beloved Uncle and Great Uncle. Service for family and friends at St. Edmund Hall Chapel at 11.00am on Tuesday 8th April. For details phone The Lodge, St. Edmund Hall 01865 279000. No flowers please, but donations to Sir Michael Sobell House, Churchill Hospital, Oxford. A Memorial Service will be held later.

WILLIAMS, Christopher John Ferdo, on 29th March 1997 at RUH Bath, Professor of Philosophy. A life lived with great courage. Much loved and respected by family and friends. Funeral Service at Downside Abbey on 7th April at 11.30am. Family flowers. Donations for Cancer to B H Mears, Powe Orchard, Midsomer Norton, BATH.

■To place your announcement, telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4129 between 9am and 3pm Mon-Fri.

Milton Cato

Caribbean conservative

MILTON Cato, the former prime minister of St Vincent & the Grenadines in the eastern Caribbean, who has died aged 81, was one of that generation of West Indian politicians who led their country from colonial dependency, through associated statehood to independence. In many ways, his whole career echoed the possibilities — and the limitations — of the Caribbean political landscape in the past 50 years.

Cato won a scholarship to grammar school — then the only path for the poor to escape the dismal hardships of the rural Caribbean — and eventually found a job as an articled clerk. In the war, he was in the Canadian Volunteer Army and, like many other West Indians, served in Europe. The law was, and remains, a popular profession for ambitious young West Indians and Cato was called to the Bar in 1949; back home he set up his chambers in Kingstown, St Vincent's capital.

But the 1960s was a decade of political stirrings, in the wake of the Moyne Commission whose 1945 report had dramatically exposed British colonial malaise in the region. It was an era when the mass of the peasantry — in St Vincent still then largely plantation workers — finally won the vote and when political parties were formed, either by populist sons of the soil such as Eric Gairy in next door Grenada or by London-trained lawyers, such as Cato. And in 1955 the St Vincent Labour Party was born with Cato as its leader.

With the emergence of the shortlived West Indian Federation in 1958, Cato went to Trinidad to sit in its parliament as one of his island's representatives. He remained a keen federalist. Unlike many other federal politicians who returned to their countries to find that the political tide had turned against them, Cato, who had already been mayor of Kingstown, entered the Vincentian parliament in 1961 and then led the SVLP to victory in the 1967 elections.

Milton Cato . . . led his country to statehood

In 1969, Cato represented the government side in the constitutional conference in London which decided that St Vincent be given the status of Associated Statehood, essentially internal self-government. At the talks, the opposition leader, Ebenezer Joshua, railed emotionally against Cato as much as against Britain, and Cato, the younger man, emerged with a reputation as a calm and thoughtful negotiator.

In the following decade, Cato and the SLVP held on to power except for two years, 1972-74, and in 1979, Cato, essentially a conservative, led St Vincent, barely recovering from the eruption of the Soufriere volcano in April 1979, to independence, while all around — in Grenada to the south and St Lucia to the north — the radicals were in the ascendance. Two months later, he won 11 out of the 13 parliamentary seats in the first post-independence election, accusing his opponents of communist sympathies.

Two days after his election win, he ruthlessly — for the Anglophone Caribbean — put down a revolt by a group of young people in Union Island, one of those islands in the Grenadine chain much favoured by honeymooners and yacht charters. Led by rastafarian Lennox "Bumber" Charles, the group had seized the airport strip to draw attention to a catalogue of complaints, from over-fishing and tourist exploitation by foreigners to drug smuggling.

Cato sent in the police, asked Barbados to send soldiers (in the first example of military support by one independent Commonwealth Caribbean state to another) and declared a state of emergency. Calm was restored and Charles was eventually jailed for eight years.

But economic stagnation (due to dependency on arrowroot and bananas), accusations of corruption and the parochialism of small-island politics, brought defeat for Cato and his SLVP in the general election of 1984. The winner, James Mitchell, a former rival who had deserted the SLVP, became — and remains — prime minister. Cato himself only just managed to retain his own seat, East St George, and he retired from politics soon after.

Thereafter, he stood apart from public life, refusing honours or any form of public recognition, a point which was not forgotten by both friends and foes at his death.

Polly Pattullo

Milton Cato, politician, born June 3, 1915; died February 10, 1997

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Tomorrow: How Barings' saviour is faring

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
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Finance Guardian

President Chirac to decide in next two days whether British firm can bid for stake in Thomson-CSF

GEC upsets French policy

Roger Cowe and Paul Webster in Paris

GEC, the British industrial group, has upset the latest attempt by the French government to privatise the Thomson-CSF defence company and challenged the country's traditionally nationalistic posture on defence matters.

Its expression of interest in the privatisation has presented President Jacques Chirac with a tough decision which could affect the shake-up of the European defence industry, as well as Anglo-French defence orders.

President Chirac will personally decide whether GEC should be allowed to participate in the bidding for the state's 58 per cent stake in Thomson-CSF.

The President created a furore abroad and won praise at home by vetoing the participation of the South Korean industrial group, Daewoo, in last year's attempted sale. But he has given no indication of whether an EU firm would be a welcome partner.

It is understood that GEC was told that if it was interested, negotiations on a share in some businesses could take place after privatisation — when the most sensitive areas of the firm could be hived off to national defence interests. Similar advice was given to the German aerospace company, Dasa, a Daimler-Benz subsidiary.

French officials said yesterday that even a preliminary inquiry might entitle a non-French firm to have access to Thomson's defence planning strategy and this might be unacceptable.

However, it was also indicated that a British or German link would be in line with France's intention to develop European defence co-operation.

The sale of the state's 58 per cent shareholding in Thomson had been expected to be contested by just two French groups, Alcatel and Lagardère, both of which have links with GEC as well as British Aerospace, which has been *waiting in the wings, hoping* to benefit from a successful bid by Lagardère, its partner in missiles.

The French government is expected to announce today or tomorrow which companies it will accept as bidders for the Thomson-CSF stake. Those bidders will then have until May 7 to submit formal offers.

Noel Forgeard, the chief executive of Lagardère's defence subsidiary, Matra Defense Espace, said yesterday that reports in Le Monde and other newspapers of GEC-Marconi's interest in bidding were correct. "We are very happy; GEC-Marconi has been a partner for 10 years," *Mr Forgeard said, referring to* Matra Marconi Space, Matra's joint satellite venture with GEC.

"We do not yet know if GEC will get beyond a declaration of intent to the stage of making a firm offer," he said.

GEC refused to comment on the situation yesterday, but has long expressed an interest in Thomson.

"It is the one European operator that offers GEC the opportunity of horizontal rationalisation, rather than the sort of vertical thing they would be forced to resort to if they got hold of a solely aerospace group," one UK analyst said.

It is thought unlikely that *GEC would enter the contest* as a sole bidder, competing with Alcatel and Lagardère. The group is more interested in participating in any break-up of Thomson as a partner with a French buyer.

"GEC will probably disrupt a simple Franco-French deal," said Bernard Lechat, an analyst at Wargny in Paris. "The government could use GEC to ask Alcatel and Lagardère to improve their bids. But nobody seriously believes that GEC will be allowed to take over Thomson-CSF," he added.

Rank's movie history sold to Carlton

Lisa Buckingham City Editor

A COLLECTION of some of the most memorable moments in British cinema — from the bitter-sweet passion of Brief Encounter to the double entendres of the Carry On movies — yesterday changed hands for £65 million in cash.

Michael Green's media group, Carlton Communications, which already owns the Korda film library and recently acquired a 10 per cent stake in the Getty film and picture portfolio, snapped up the collection which carries the striking "gongman" logo.

Although a minnow in the world of film distribution — where major players are ready to invest similar sums of money in just one Hollywood release — the Rank library of about 740 feature films encapsulates more than 60 years of British movie making.

Oscar winner David Lean's Brief Encounter and Great Expectations line up alongside The Fabulous Baker Boys and surprise hit, Fried Green Tomatoes, while thrillers including The Ipcress File and The Thirty Nine Steps jostle against Lord Olivier's Hamlet and Alfred Hitchcock's Sabotage.

Brief encounter . . . Sam Rockwell (left) and Mischa Barton star in soon-to-be-released Lawn Dogs, the first film fully financed by Rank for several years

The sale of the remains of its film distribution archive is part of Rank's efforts to rejuvenate its prospects in the eyes of the City and to concentrate more on the services and leisure parts of its business, such as the Hard Rock Café chain and the casino and bingo outlets. Rank will retain the "gongman" as its corporate logo but the famous image will fade as a preface to future cinema releases.

The company, which has now raised about £300 million from the sale of non-core operations and whose shares rose 6½p to 427p, denied that it had failed to realise the potential of the film portfolio, which produced operating profits of £4.1 million last year on sales of £25.4 million.

Carlton was enthusiastic about prospects for the film library, which will increase its archive to about 7,500 hours of programming including 1,000 movies. A joint venture between Rank and Castle Rock also gives Carlton access to films such as The Madness of King George and Kenneth Branagh's Hamlet.

Mr Green said the appetite for classic as well as contemporary films was increasing both in the UK and overseas and yesterday's deal would help Carlton's position as a global content provider. Its own broadcast outlets — which include ITV's London weekday franchise as well as Central TV and a planned digital film channel — are expected to benefit from showing the best of the Rank archive.

Insurer zaps its alien cover

Cult encounter was too close for comfort, reports Lisa Buckingham

THE company which insured the 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult against being abducted by aliens said yesterday it would stop offering the extraordinary cover because of feelings of guilt.

Simon Burgess, managing director of the insurance broker, which has made a speciality of bizarre covers such as policies against immaculate conception, said he was saddened at the loss of life.

The members of the Heaven's Gate cult died in an apparent mass suicide last week at a multi-million dollar mansion on the outskirts of San Diego, California, in the hope of being transported to another planet by aliens following in the trail of the Hale-Bopp comet.

According to Mr Burgess's company, Goodfellow Rebecca Ingram Pearson (GRIP), the members of the cult took out their insurance cover on October 10 in the name of The Higher Source, the name of its internet web-site, at a $1,000-a-year premium.

Mr Burgess told the Press Association that the group of big British insurers who back his policies could lose $39 million (£24 million) if a US coroner's court delivers an open verdict on the affair, opening the way for families of the cult members to claim up to $1 million per head.

GRIP — which has provided weird insurance for the past 15 years, such as cover against turning into a vampire or werewolf — said the cult members had probably found out about the policy from its site on the Internet.

According to Mr Burgess, about 4,000 clients around the world have taken out policies for eventualities involving aliens, though others took advantage of earthier protection such as loss of earnings insurance for prostitutes who have been stricken by headaches and backaches.

Unfaithful husbands have also been signing up to protect themselves against "Bobbitting" — a policy developed after John Bobbitt of Virginia had his penis severed by his wife in 1993.

Mr Burgess said withdrawal of the more outlandish covers would cut income by £1 million a year but the group was happier concentrating on its mainstream redundancy and disability business.

● Lloyd's, which yesterday predicted profits of just over £1 billion for 1994 — its latest full year — vehemently denied allegations that it had contributed to the campaign funds of Chuck Quackenbush, the California insurance commissioner playing a crucial role in the attempt by the London market to settle litigation with US investors.

Co-op profits aid defence

Roger Cowe

THE Co-operative Bank yesterday reported its third consecutive year of record profits, bolstering the Co-operative Movement's defence against the takeover ambitions of Andrew Regan's Lanica Trust.

Managing director, Terry Thomas, said the 24 per cent increase in pre-tax profit to £45 million was due to the bank's unique ethical approach which had attracted valuable customers and resulted in a 27 per cent rise in retail deposits.

But he warned that they would abandon the bank if it were taken over by an entrepreneur such as Mr Regan.

"Our customers are under 45, managerial and professional, articulate and opinionated. They don't allow things to happen without making a big fuss. I have had thousands of letters from customers saying: 'don't you dare sell this bank'. Regan just doesn't understand. If he did take us over he would probably only acquire a shell because the customers would leave in droves."

The bank is building on the customer involvement which influenced its ethical policies. In the next few weeks, it will distribute a special "Partnership Report" and questionnaire to all two million customers asking for their views on its ethical stance.

It has also agreed a "no compulsory redundancy" agreement as part of a three-year pay and conditions package with the banking union Bifu.

The Co-operative Movement, which has been besieged by Mr Regan for months, will hold out the bank, with its 20 per cent post-tax return, as an example of how co-operative principles can generate excellent financial perfomance.

The bank paid a dividend of £5 million to the CWS, an increase of 25 per cent on last year.

BM switches to Airbus

Keith Harper Transport Editor

AIRBUS Industrie yesterday landed a £625 million order to supply 20 new aircraft to British Midland, the largest deal to be placed by a British carrier with the European group.

The UK airline, the second largest after British Airways, is to take delivery of 20 twin-engine planes from the A320 family over the next five years. An option will allow British Midland to upgrade A320s to the larger A321.

British Midland's chairman, Sir Michael Bishop, said: "The infrastructure constraints at European airports mean that a growing airline like BM has to increase aircraft capacity to maximise utilisation of slots."

He said the flexibility and technical sophistication of the A320 family suited the planned growth and expansion of the airline. The order is for eight A321s, seating 186 people each, and 12 A320s, each seating 160 passengers.

British Midland's fleet consists of 35 aircraft, of which 26 are Boeings. The other nine were manufactured by the Dutch company, Fokker, which collapsed last year. This could be a costly change for British Midland because a new manufacturer means pilot retraining and new stocks of spare parts.

The order consolidates Airbus's position as the world's second biggest aircraft manufacturer behind Boeing. The consortium's partners are Aérospatiale of France and Deutsche Aerospace of Germany, both with 37.9 per cent, British Aerospace with 20 per cent and Casa of Spain with 4.2 per cent. Airbus is confident it can obtain a 50 per cent market share, up from 35 per cent, by 2000.

Both companies are vigorously targeting China, which last week placed an order with Boeing for 30 aircraft valued at almost £1 billion. Airbus is hoping to obtain an even bigger order when the French president, Jacques Chirac, visits next month.

Prudential completes exodus from Continent

Lisa Buckingham City Editor

THE Prudential insurance group will complete the sale of its Italian operations this week, marking the end of a five-year disposal programme designed to help reshape its global business.

The move, which marks the group's total exodus from insurance on the Continent after last year's £31 million sale of its Dutch company, comes as Prudential gets ready to pay £2.15 billion for Scottish Amicable.

The sale of the Italian subsidiary will make little difference to the Pru's overall finances, but Merrill Lynch analyst Roman Cizdyn said the disposal was welcome.

"It is only small but it has been on the market for ages. Although this has been a long time coming it's good news and just about completes the disposal programme," he said.

New annual premiums in Italy totalled £11 million last year while single premiums were £36 million. Although financial results were not detailed it is thought that the profit performance of the Italian arm improved in 1996.

The Pru has been turning its attentions away from Europe and concentrating, in addition to its substantial US business, on the fast expanding territories of Asia as well as Australia and New Zealand where it recently trumped AMP to become that country's biggest insurance group.

Notebook

Yes to credibility, no to tax cuts

Edited by Alex Brummer

THE view of many economists is that the required fiscal policy after the election will be for budgetary tightening. The official PSBR forecast for the next financial year is for a £19.2 billion deficit but this is considered optimistic by respected groups such as the National Institute.

There were always several soft assumptions in Chancellor Kenneth Clarke's plans, including the "save to spend" scheme, designed to increase tax revenues; the capital to be generated by the private finance initiative; and a growth forecast devised before the 2.75-mark pound — not to mention the rising BSE costs.

It is against this unpropitious backdrop that the Conservative manifesto proposes to heap more tax cuts. The commitment to transfer unused personal tax allowances back to the working husband or wife will clearly have appeal in the suburbs and shires.

In Mr Major's version of events, the cost will be a modest £1.2 billion to the Exchequer. For that to be the case, however, the new tax has to be defined very narrowly: it will only apply to basic rate, married, taxpayers receiving child benefit. A broader and bolder transferable relief, at the marginal rate of tax, would cost £3.4 billion.

Indeed, much of what the Tories are seeking to portray as a radical tax cutting agenda is bottom drawer stuff. The goal of a 20p basic rate of tax was declared by Ken Clarke in his last Budget, and would cost £5.4 billion.

Similarly, it has been a long-term goal for the Tories to phase out inheritance tax (cost £1.5 billion) and capital gains tax (cost £3 billion). These are laudable aims, designed to free up the supply side of the economy.

But they have to be paid for. Those who have suffered from the Tories indirect taxes: insurance premium tax to the airport levy and VAT on fuel, are fully aware that there is no free lunch.

Even in the sixth year of recovery, the PSBR has still to be tamed and the UK is one of the few major European economies outside the Maastricht criteria. It is the re-establishment of fiscal credibility, not notional tax cuts, which the financial markets need.

Safety nets

AS THE asset management regulator Imro prepares this month to discipline Morgan Grenfell Asset Management, its former boss Keith Percy and other officials who might have been expected to keep renegade manager Peter Young in check, some clearer thinking is needed on safety nets for the industry.

MGAM is fortunate that in Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, it has an owner able to pay the £440 million or so price of the fiasco; others are not.

Mercury Asset Management, once part of the SG Warburg empire and now a free-standing fund manager with a buoyant share price and strong reputation, has set a useful precedent by creating a £250 million three-year standby loan in case of crisis.

But MAM's move raises interesting questions in a sector once regarded as low risk but seen to be anything but in the past year. There have been problems at Jardine Fleming, as well as the far more serious difficulties at MGAM, while the Bank of England has had to reassess the risks of fund management operations, together with Imro.

This ought to have raised troubling questions for independent fund management companies like M&G and Perpetual. However good their compliance procedures, the pressure for strong performance can lead to a higher risk profile than they would care to admit: yet there is a limited cushion in terms of shareholders funds.

But the options are few. They can find rich owners but that would lead to less choice in an industry which has been enlivened by new players like Virgin and Direct Line that have chipped away at margins.

Alternatively, they can put in place an MAM-style safety net to reassure investors. With the present volatility in global stock markets highlighting the risks of fund management, more security and less marketing pizzazz may be what the public needs.

Co-op rules

THE Co-op Bank yesterday highlighted weaknesses on both sides of the phoney war between the Co-op and Andrew Regan's Lanica Trust.

Its excellent results prove not only that co-operation can be profitable, but that it can be more profitable than capitalism. That knocks on the head the suggestion put about by Lanica that the Co-op idea is a silly, old-fashioned notion which should go the way of mutual insurance and savings.

But the bank's performance also raises questions for the CWS. The first is about values: why has the rest of the movement not attempted to capitalise on its principles in the way the bank has shown can work wonders? The second is about profits: why is the rest of the movement not as effective as the bank?

Mr Regan's supposed bid may be a non-starter, especially where the Co-op bank and insurance society are concerned, but that doesn't mean that nothing needs to change in the Co-op world. His unwelcome approach may yet prove important in forcing Co-operators to address why they are in business, and perhaps to focus their energies in areas where co-operation can make a difference.

Woolwich faces windfall challenge

Richard Miles

WOOLWICH Building Society is facing a legal challenge from one of its members concerning plans to exclude 35,000 savers from the £3 billion share bonanza generated by its flotation.

Tony Webster claims that he is one of thousands of savers denied a windfall payout worth at least £900 because of the Woolwich's decision to impose a retrospective qualifying date.

Mr Webster, a 59-year-old guest-house proprietor, will challenge the legality of the retrospective date when the Woolwich's case comes before the Building Societies Commission on April 16. The flotation, scheduled for July 7, needs the commission's approval.

If the commissioners fail to uphold his complaint, Mr Webster says he will take his case to the small claims court in an attempt to obtain his £900 payout.

"The Woolwich owes a duty of care to all its members, even carpetbaggers like myself. Tens of thousands of savers who joined before the Woolwich announced its plans are in exactly the same position. They could be entitled to £30 million," says Mr Webster.

Last night, the Woolwich spokesman insisted its flotation would not be impeded by Mr Webster's challenge.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.04	France 9.00	Italy 2,692	Singapore 2.32
Austria 18.83	Germany 2.6775	Malta 0.5980	South Africa 7.06
Belgium 55.25	Greece 427.00	Netherlands 3.0000	Spain 225.25
Canada 2.22	Hong Kong 12.42	New Zealand 2.29	Sweden 12.27
Cyprus 0.7995	India 59.07	Norway 10.80	Switzerland 2.31
Denmark 10.27	Ireland 1.0100	Portugal 269.00	Turkey 203,260
Finland 8.06	Israel 5.52	Saudi Arabia 6.08	USA 1.6140

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

Racing

Man can prove he is still number one

Chris Hawkins expects Richards's gelding to do his level best on Aintree's easy course

MARTIN PIPE runs Challenger du Luc in today's Martell Cup at Aintree and the seven-year-old could turn out again on Saturday in the Grand National.

The trainer will make a decision about the National after he sees how well the *gelding takes today's* exertions.

It is, of course, possible that Challenger du Luc could end up carrying top weight of 11st 10lb in the National if Master Oats defects today.

"At the moment it's neither a yes nor a no. I just don't know," said Pipe yesterday. "Challenger du Luc might run but one thing I can tell you for certain is that Make A Stand will run in the Martell Hurdle on Saturday."

Make A Stand, the champion hurdler, misses what on paper would seem an easier engagement in the Seagram Top Novice Hurdle, over two miles, today while Saturday's contest is over an extra half mile.

Challenger du Luc is one of only five runners in the Martell Cup and on Cheltenham Gold Cup form has something to find on Barton Bank, runner-up to Mr Mulligan in the Festival showpiece.

Barton Bank finished nearly 10 lengths in front of Challenger du Luc with One Man a further 16 lengths adrift in sixth.

On the face of it the one horse who cannot win this afternoon, particularly as he meets his rivals on 8lb worse terms, is One Man but away from Cheltenham he is a different proposition.

At least that is my reasoning in making him the selection. Gordon Richards's grey is at his best on flat, sharp tracks and the Mildmay Course is such a circuit.

The Irish challenger Merry Gale, who won this two years ago when Barton Bank started favourite but finished tailed off, missed the Cheltenham Festival and will be relatively fresh.

He could be the big danger to One Man (2.35) in a race which may turn out to be a tactical battle — the issue being decided by speed rather than stamina.

This is a fascinating day's racing, starting with a trappy looking Seagram Novice Hurdle. Midnight Legend (2.00) is apparently held on Ludlow form by the enigmatic Green Green Desert and High In The Clouds, but was making his hurdling debut then.

He has since won nicely at Wincanton, and David Nicholson has had today's race in mind for him for a long time.

Nicholson mounts a strong raid and will be hoping Mulligan (3.10) can atone for his fall in the Arkle Chase at Cheltenham where he was sent off a hot favourite.

He had looked the season's top novice before that and I give him the vote although respecting Amancio, a fluent winner at Ascot in February.

Nicholson runs Kadi with a chance in the John Hughes Chase over the National fences.

Kadi has some useful form but has not quite come up to expectations, a remark which cannot be applied to Senor El Betrutti, the top weight, who is seeking a four-timer.

Despite his credentials, it is possible he is best dominating small fields, however, and this will not be a contest for the faint-hearted.

Tim Forster saddled Dublin Flyer to win this two seasons ago and he brings back one of his old favourites Coonawara, who has been off the track for 18 months with a knee injury.

Coonawara (3.45), a bold jumper, has a touch of class and with Forster's ability to get horses fighting fit after a lay-off he could run a very big race.

Cheltenham form does not always work out at this meeting but I am hoping Nicholson's L'Opera (4.20) has recovered from his excellent fourth in the Triumph Hurdle where he seemed to be outstayed after looking the winner turning for home.

Hard News, two lengths second to the Triumph winner Commanche Court at Leopardstown, looks the main threat.

Pipe has three runners in the concluding event after entering no less than eight. He should hold the key with Big Strand (5.20), who finished so strongly at Cheltenham and should relish this extended three miles.

Injury puts Time For A Run out of Grand National

TIME FOR A RUN, one of the leading fancies for Saturday's Martell Grand National, will miss the race.

Edward O'Grady's 10-year-old, the intended mount of Norman Williamson, has been heavily supported for the race in recent weeks but owner J P McManus said: "I don't know exactly what the injury is, but I am told he has chipped a joint and obviously he is out of Aintree, which is a bit of a blow at this stage."

Williamson is now on standby to ride top weight Master Oats, whose participation is looking increasingly likely.

Kim Bailey, the gelding's trainer, will walk the course this morning before deciding whether to run the 11-year-old, in whose absence the weights for the National will rise by 15lb.

But at Worcester races yesterday Bailey said: "It's going to take very fast ground for him not to run." Aintree began watering the National course yesterday.

Photo call . . . A Dubai World Cup contender attracts media attention before working out yesterday PHOTOGRAPH EMPICS

Siphon to make the most of second chance

Ken Oliver

AFTER the freak thunderstorm which washed out the Dubai World Cup last Saturday, everything looks set fair for the re-scheduled $4 million race on the sand at the Nad Al Sheba track this afternoon.

Thirteen of the original 14 runners line up for the world's richest race with only the French connections of Helissio deciding not to stay and fight another day.

American trained horses provided the first three home last year and it is short odds that the first prize of nearly £1.5 million will be bound for the States again.

Richard Mandella, leading trainer on the west coast of America who sent out Soul Of The Matter to finish second to Cigar last year, saddles the two market leaders, Siphon and Sandpit who have both worked well since Saturday.

Both horses were bred in Brazil and were raced at local tracks until graduating to the Californian circuit. Sandpit had raced on turf until being switched to dirt for the Santa Anita Handicap in February when he finished three lengths behind Siphon.

Sandpit can be expected to improve on that initial run on dirt, but Siphon was an easy winner that day and the general opinion is that he will confirm the form. The one doubt concerning the quick-starting Siphon is that he races on Lasix — a drug to prevent internal bleeding — which is denied him in Dubai.

Kammtarra would be a popular winner for the locals. He was rather disappointing when running in England but has taken well to the sand, winning both his races in good style.

Sheikh Mohammed, who masterminded today's race, has two running in his colours, Singspiel and Flemensfirth.

Singspiel could prove the pick of the pair. The five-year-old is a tough customer who has run some fine races, including a second in the Breeders' Cup and victory in the Japan Cup.

The race will be screened live on BBC 2 and, with underfoot conditions in their favour, the American horses should again have the edge with Siphon (4.35) showing the way home.

Aintree card with guide to the form

2.00 Midnight Legend
2.35 One Man
3.10 Mulligan
3.45 COONAWARA (nap)
4.20 L'Opera
4.50 Orchestral Suite
5.20 Big Strand (nb)

Going: Good. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest NH outing.

2.00 SEAGRAM TOP NOVICE HURDLE 2m 110yds £16,730

101 1331 GREEN GREEN DESERT (35) (D) O Sherwood 6-11-0 ... D Bridgwater
102 212 HIGH IN THE CLOUDS (35) (D) (BF) T Forster 5-11-0 ... S Wynne
103 41 MIDNIGHT LEGEND (14) (D) D Nicholson 6-11-0 ... R Johnson
104 411272 MISTER RM (8) (D) (BF) N Twiston-Davies 5-11-0 ... C Llewellyn
105 211 NIGEL'S LAD (33) (D) P Haslam 5-11-0 ... M Foster
106 NO PATTERN (26) G L Moore 5-11-0 ... L Wyer ★
107 NORDIC BREEZE (23) (D) M Pipe 5-11-0 ... D Walsh ★
108 121 SHARPICAL (20) (D) N Henderson 5-11-0 ... M A Fitzgerald
109 CRANDON BOULEVARD (15) (D) Mrs J Pitman 4-10-8 ... J Osborne

TOP FORM TIPS: Green Green Desert 8, Midnight Legend 7, Sharpical 6

1996: Tragic Hero 4 10 8 J Lower 20-1 (M C Pipe) 15 ran

Betting: Sharpical, Green Green Desert, 4-1 Nigel's Lad, 5-1 High In The Clouds, 6-1 Midnight Legend, 10-1 Nordic Breeze, 14-1 Crandon Boulevard, 20-1 Mister Rm. 9 runners

FORM GUIDE - SHARPICAL: Going well, headway 3 out, led on bit flat, hard held, beat Fire On Ice 3l (Folkestone 2m 110y nov hdl, Gd).
GREEN GREEN DESERT: Headway 5th, led on bit last, easily, won by 10l from HIGH IN THE CLOUDS (Ludlow 2m nov hdl, Gd).
NIGEL'S LAD: Close up, ran on strongly from 3 out, beat Secret Service 22l (Doncaster 2m4f nov hdl, Gd).
MIDNIGHT LEGEND: Led, led again 2 out, ridden out, beat Embankment 3l (Wincanton 2m mdn hdl, Gd-Fm).
NORDIC BREEZE: Headway, every chance next, one pace, 3rd of 16, 11l behind Shadow Leader (Cheltenham 2m 110y nov hdl, Gd).

BBC-2

2.35 MARTELL CUP CHASE 3m 1f £37,561

201 ONE MAN (21) (D) G Richards 9-11-13 ... R Dunwoody
202 BARTON BANK (21) D Nicholson 11-11-5 ... D Walsh
203 CHALLENGER DU LUC (21) M Pipe 7-11-5 ... C Maude ★
204 MERRY GALE (40) (CD) J Dreaper 9-11-5 ... C O'Dwyer
205 ROUYAN (496) Mrs J Pitman 11-11-5 ... J Titley

TOP FORM TIPS: One Man 8, Challenger Du Luc 7

1996: Scotton Banks (Ire) 7 11 5 L Wyer 9-2 (T D Easterby) 6 ran

TOP FORM TIPS: Big Strand 8, Erzadjan 7, What A Question 6

1996: Top Spin 7 10 11 A P McCoy 20-1 (J R Jenkins) 19 ran

Betting: 5-1 Big Strand, 6-1 Escartefigue, 7-1 Erzadjan, 8-1 Danjing, Brave Tornado, 10-1 Tamarpour, 12-1 Smith Too, Freddie Muck, Silver Shred. 17 runners

FORM GUIDE - BIG STRAND: Headway before last, strong run, led last stride, beat Allegation a sh hd (Cheltenham 2m5f hcp hdl, Gd-Fm).
ESCARTEFIGUE: Headway 6th, led 3 out, ridden and headed after 2 out, one pace, 5th of 17, 6l behind Karshi (Cheltenham 3m 110y hdl, Gd).
DANJING: Tracked leaders, every chance approaching 2 out, one pace, 3rd of 24, 7l behind Pharanear, with ERZADJAN (gave 3lb), headway 3 out, 5th and beaten when unseated rider last (Cheltenham 3m2f hcp hdl, Gd).
BRAVE TORNADO: Prominent, led 4 out, all out, beat Moorish 1l (Chepstow 2m4f 110y hcp hdl, Sft).
TAMARPOUR: Held up, headway 9th, ran on one pace, 3rd of 7, 4l behind Tribute (Ascot 3m hcp hdl, Gd).

● Blinkered for the first time — AINTREE: 2.00 No Pattern. LEICESTER: 3.30 Brave Envoy; 4.40 Three Cheers.

Dubai World Cup

4.35 1m 2f £1,428,571 BBC 2

1 20514- EVEN TOP (166) M Tompkins(UK) 4-9-0 ... R Hills 1
2 21121- SINGSPIEL (150) (D) M Stoute(UK) 5-9-0 ... J D Bailey 2
3 225-16 FORMAL GOLD (32) W Perry(USA) 4-9-0 ... J Bravo 3
4 51113- HELISSIO (130) (D) (BF) E Lellouche(FR) 4-9-0 ... NON RUNNER 4
5 61/11- FLEMENSFIRTH (144) (D) J Gosden(UK) 5-9-0 ... G Hind 6
6 1410-1 HOKUTO VEGA (67) T Nakano(JPN) 7-8-11 ... N Yokoyama 8
7 0-2133 JUGGLER (24) (D) (BF) Ms G Waterhouse(AUS) 5-9-0 ... G Boss 9
8 113-11 SIPHON (32) (D) R Mandella(USA) 6-9-0 ... D Flores 10
9 1310-11 KAMMTARRA (21) (CD) S bin Suroor 4-9-0 ... L Dettori 11
10 133-12 SANDPIT (32) (D) R Mandella(USA) 8-9-0 ... C Nakatani 12
11 1112-6 KEY OF LUCK (25) (CD) K McLaughlin 6-9-0 ... C Asmussen 13
12 1230-4 BIJOU D'INDE (25) M Johnston(UK) 4-9-0 ... J Weaver 5
13 25141- LUSO (116) C Brittain(UK) 5-9-0 ... M J Kinane 7

TOP FORM TIPS: Siphon 8, Sandpit 7, Singspiel 6

Betting: 11-4 Siphon, 7-2 Sandpit, 4-1 Formal Gold, 6-1 Singspiel, 8-1 Kammtarra, 10-1 Flemensfirth, 14-1 Key Of Luck, 20-1 Hokuto Vega, 33-1 Even Top, Luso, 40-1 Bijou d'Inde, Juggler. 12 runners

Leicester runners and riders

2.25 Sylvan Princess
2.55 Grand Lad
3.30 Baptismal Rock
4.05 O'Higgins
4.40 Three Cheers
5.10 Stanton Harcourt
5.40 Victory Team

Draw: High best up to 1m. Going: Firm. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest outing

2.25 HARBOROUGH FILLIES' HANDICAP 4YO 1m £3,486

1 30-0050 TEA PARTY (34) (D) K Cunningham-Brown 4-9-10 ... T Quinn 7★
2 2210-10 ANGEL FACE (14) P Evans 4-9-8 ... J F Egan 1
3 131800- SYLVAN PRINCESS (194) (D) D Cosgrove 4-9-5 ... M Rimmer 3
4 640-430 MIMOSA (8) (D) S Dow 4-9-1 ... W Ryan 4
5 00344-0 HEATHYARDS LADY (8) (D) R Hollinshead 6-8-9 ... F Lynch (3) 2
6 101280- CHARLTON IMP (190) (D) R Hodges 4-8-6 ... S Drowne 5
7 25000- WITH THE TEMPO (148) Dr J Scargill 4-7-11 ... J Quinn 6

TOP FORM TIPS: Mimosa 8, Angel Face 7

Betting: 9-4 Angel Face, 7-2 Sylvan Princess, 9-2 Mimosa, 5-1 Heathyards Lady, 6-1 Charlton Imp, 10-1 With The Tempo, 16-1 Tea Party. 7 runners

2.55 LODDINGTON CONDITIONS STAKES 3YO 6f £5,068

1 12-0 INDIAN SPARK (12) W Turner 9-2 ... T Sprake 5
2 31523- GRAND LAD (173) R Armstrong 9-0 ... M Roberts 3
3 14- IRISH ACCORD (212) (D) Mrs J Ramsden 9-0 ... J Fortune 6
4 501230- NANT Y GAMER (195) (D) J Berry 9-0 ... K Darley 4
5 51503-0 DIVIDE AND RULE (14) R Hollinshead 8-12 ... D Griffiths (3) 1
6 31224- DANCETHENIGHTAWAY (194) B Meehan 8-9 ... Pat Eddery 2

TOP FORM TIPS: Nant Y Gamer 8, Dancethenightaway 7

Betting: Evens Grand Lad, 4-1 Indian Spark, 5-1 Irish Accord, 8-1 Nant Y Gamer, Dancethenightaway, 16-1 Divide And Rule. 6 runners

3.30 RUSTON OVERY SELLING STAKES 3YO 6f £2,469

1 1-44640 FIT FOR THE JOB (33) (D) T Wall 9-5 ... D Griffiths (3) 8
2 10104-1 WITHOUT FRIENDS (9) (D) W Storey 9-5 ... S Whitworth 11
3 5020-00 BAPTISMAL ROCK (33) B Curley 9-0 ... W Ryan 2
4 603604- BATTLE GROUND (139) N Callaghan 9-0 ... Pat Eddery 5
5 0- BRAVE ENVOY (183) M Heaton-Ellis 9-0 ... S Drowne 10★
6 34-2204 BROADGATE FLYER (47) Mrs L Stubbs 9-0 ... K Fallon 6
7 082100- CHARLTON SPRING (212) (D) R Hodges 9-0 ... T Quinn 4
8 0- SEAMUS (376) C Hill 9-0 ... J Quinn 3
9 0 BELLABULA (9) M Dods 8-9 ... S Webster 7
10 00-0040 ROCK FANTASY (41) C Murray 8-9 ... Nicola Howarth 1★
11 002-545 TERRY'S ROSE (41) R Hollinshead 8-9 ... K Darley 9

TOP FORM TIPS: Battle Ground 8, Without Friends 7, Brave Envoy 6

Betting: 9-4 Without Friends, 3-1 Charlton Spring, 7-1 Baptismal Rock, 8-1 Battle Ground, Broadgate Flyer, 12-1 Terry's Rose. 11 runners

4.05 KNIGHTON MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES 2YO 5f £2,718

1 ARM AND A LEG C Dwyer 9-0 ... J Stack 8
2 3 O' HIGGINS (12) R Boss 9-0 ... W Ryan 1
3 PRINCE FOLEY W Turner 9-0 ... D McGaffin (7) 6
4 REJECTED R Hannon 9-0 ... Pat Eddery 9
5 RUSTY BABE J Gunn 9-0 ... J Quinn 3
6 SEVENTH HEAVEN J Berry 9-0 ... K Darley 2
7 SMOOTH SAILING K McAuliffe 9-0 ... J F Egan 5
8 ARIAN DA B Palling 8-9 ... T Sprake 7
9 DAWN PATROL K Hogg 8-9 ... Dean McKeown 10
10 SEA WIP Marvin Meade 8-9 ... J Reid 4

Betting: 9-4 Seventh Heaven, 5-2 Rejected, 7-2 O' Higgins, 8-1 Prince Foley, Arian Da, 12-1 Smooth Sailing. 10 runners

4.40 LANGHAM MAIDEN STAKES 1m 3f 183yds £3,677

1 KOTA J Wharton 4-9-12 ... K Fallon 6
2 GET A LIFE John A Harris 4-9-7 ... J Bramhill (5) 4
3 OWDY Mrs N Macauley 3-8-6 ... S Sanders 3
4 0- THREE CHEERS (166) J Gosden 3-8-6 ... J Carroll 2★
5 0- WELLCOME INN (202) John A Harris 3-8-6 ... J O'Reilly 5
6 05- NIGHT MIRAGE (146) M Johnston 3-8-1 ... J Fanning 1

TOP FORM TIPS: Three Cheers 8, Night Mirage 7

Betting: 4-9 Three Cheers, 7-2 Night Mirage, 10-1 Kota, 16-1 Owdy, 20-1 Get A Life, Wellcome Inn. 6 runners

5.10 SIMON DE MONTFORT MAIDEN STAKES 1m 2f £4,123

1 000- CHARNWOOD JACK (303) I Campbell 4-9-12 ... R Price 9
2 5/3- MUKHLLES (348) Bob Jones 4-9-12 ... N Day 5
3 TASWIB D Morley 4-9-12 ... R Cochrane 1
4 300/0- WOODLANDS LAD TOO (451) P Pritchard 5-9-12 ... N Adams 6
5 603-7 WESTERN SONATA (7) Lord Huntingdon 4-9-7 ... D Harrison 8
6 362- STANTON HARCOURT (190) J Dunlop 3-8-7 ... Pat Eddery 7
7 SURTSEY M Johnston 3-8-7 ... M Hills 3
8 LONDON'S HEART P Cole 3-8-2 ... C Rutter 4
9 2 NAMBUCCA (13) Mrs J Cecil 3-8-2 ... Martin Dwyer (3) 2

TOP FORM TIPS: Nambucca 10, Mukhlles 8, Western Sonata 7

Betting: 6-4 Stanton Harcourt, 7-2 London's Heart, 9-2 Nambucca, 6-1 Surtsey, 7-1 Mukhlles, 8-1 Western Sonata. 9 runners

5.40 KIBWORTH HANDICAP 7f £3,869

1 522230- ARTERXERXES (203) (D) M Heaton-Ellis 4-9-10 ... A Clark 1
2 00000-5 NIGHT DANCE (13) (D) K Morgan 5-9-8 ... R Ffrench (7) 10
3 0/5463-0 ATTARIKH (13) Mrs A King 4-8-13 ... M Roberts 2
4 65400-0 MUJOVA (12) R Hollinshead 3-8-13 ... F Lynch (3) 3
5 02205-2 VICTORY TEAM (8) G Balding 5-8-12 ... T Quinn 7
6 346032- TIME OF NIGHT (209) R Guest 4-8-11 ... D Griffiths (3) 4
7 424-1 PLAISIR D'AMOUR (7) (5lb ex) (CD) N Callaghan 3-8-9 ... Pat Eddery 5
8 024400- SAFEY ANA (176) (D) B Hanbury 6-8-3 ... D O'Donohoe (3) 6
9 250018- MASTER M-E-N (192) N Babbage 5-8-0 ... R Mullen (5) 9★
10 25000-2 LAST CHANCE (7) D Cosgrove 3-7-11 ... N Carlisle 8

TOP FORM TIPS: Plaisir D'Amour 8, Victory Team 7, Time Of Night 6

Betting: 3-1 Plaisir D'amour, 4-1 Last Chance, 9-2 Time Of Night, 5-1 Victory Team, 7-1 Night Dance, 8-1 Mujova, 10-1 Arterxerxes. 10 runners

Taunton (N.H.)

2.15 Mystic Hill
2.45 Prince Equiname
3.20 Dougalago
3.55 Little Shefford
4.30 Northern Singer
5.00 Departure

Going: Firm, hard in places. ★ Denotes blinkers.
● Precautionary inspection 7am.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest NH outing.

2.15 ORCHARD FM TIM MANNS MAIDEN HURDLE 2m 1f £2,040

1 044 MYSTIC HILL (27) R Frost 6-11-5 ... J Frost
2 PP MISS GEE-ELL (23) N Thomson 5-11-0 ... Mr E Babington (7)
3 P OSCILIGHTS GIFT (14) M Campion 5-11-0 ... W McFarland
4 5060 CONTRACT BRIDGE (14) P Murphy 4-10-8 ... J Kavanagh
5 030 KAFS LADY (152) C Popham 4-10-8 ... T Dascombe (3)

Betting: 4-9 Mystic Hill, 4-1 Kaf's Lady, 9-2 Contract Bridge, 33-1 Oscilights Gift, 50-1 Miss Gee-Ell. 5 runners

2.45 MARCH HARE CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' SELL HANDICAP HURDLE 3m 110yds £1,881

1 543- PRINCE EQUINAME (377) R Simpson 5-12-0 ... N Rossiter (7)
2 482008 ANORAK (30) R Stronge 7-11-2 ... X Aizpuru
3 3/////- CO-TACK (2830) R Livermore 12-10-2 ... Chris Webb
4 F-PF00F MASTER GOODENOUGH (59) A Foster 6-10-1 ... D Creech (5)
5 PPP540 RORY'M (3) L Waring 8-10-0 ... DOUBTFUL

Betting: 11-10 Prince Equiname, 3-1 Anorak, 7-2 Master Goodenough, 8-1 Co-Tack. 4 runners

3.20 WSM MERCEDES BENZ ACTROS HANDICAP CHASE 3m £4,155

1 14111/-0 DOUGALAGO (47) M Pipe 7-12-0 ... G Supple (5) ★
2 21U443 HERBERT BUCHANAN (126) (C) P Nicholls 7-10-12 ... Mr J Tizzard (7)

Betting: 10-11 Herbert Buchanan, Evens Dougalago. 2 runners

3.55 ORCHARD FM BOB MCCREADIE HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 1f £2,201

1 31-4PP4 LAYHAM LOW (180) O Sherwood 6-11-10 ... J A McCarthy
2 0-41262 LITTLE SHEFFORD (10) (CD) M Muggeridge 5-11-1 ... S Curran
3 P20403 SHIFTING MOON (22) (D) F Jordan 5-10-6 ... Derek Byrne

Betting: 5-4 Little Shefford, 7-4 Layham Low, 5-2 Shifting Moon. 3 runners

4.30 WSM MERCEDES BENZ SPRINTER NOVICE CHASE 2m 110yds £2,215

1 1UP1FF NORTHERN SINGER (3) (CD) (BF) R Hodges 7-12-0 ... T Dascombe (3)
2 5-00254 INDIAN TEMPLE (27) K Bishop 6-11-0 ... R Greene
3 0005-P5 KETCHICAN (16) S Knight 5-10-7 ... S Anderson

Betting: Evens Northern Singer, 7-4 Indian Temple, 4-1 Ketchican. 3 runners

5.00 WSM MERCEDES BENZ VITO HUNTERS' CHASE (amateurs) 3m £1,145

1 345///5- ARCTIC BARON (314) (D) Miss M Raymond 12-12-7 ... Miss L Blackford (7)
2 4-53P4P L'UOMO PIU (163) (CD) A Barrow 13-12-7 ... O McPhail (7)
3 4U1314 RUSTY BRIDGE (16) (C) (D) Mrs S Johnson 10-12-7 ... R Burton (7)
4 62////- CLEASBY HILL (2164) Mrs F Walker 12-12-0 ... D Alers-Hankey (7)
5 3P/42P-3 GOOD KING HENRY (23) I Widdicombe 11-12-0 ... I Widdicombe (7)
6 F2/-P4 J B LAD (35) H Tuck 11-12-0 ... Miss P Gundry (7)
7 602///- DEPARTURE (1800) Miss M Bragg 10-11-9 ... J Creighton (7)
8 2-34340 MANOR BOUND (16) Mrs S Williams 7-11-9 ... I Dowrick (7)

Betting: 5-2 Rusty Bridge, 3-1 Good King Henry, 7-2 Departure, 6-1 L'uomo Piu, 8-1 Arctic Baron, 10-1 J B Lad. 8 runners

Results

HAMILTON

2.10 (5f 4yds): 1, MISTER BANKES, T Sprake (1-3 fav); **2, Mamma's Boy** (4-1); **3, Filey Brigg** (33-1). 4 ran. 2½, ¾. (W Turner) Tote: £1.20. Dual F. £1.40. CSF: £1.87

2.40 (6f 5yds): 1, I'M STILL HERE, K Darley (5-2 fav). **2, Native Thatch** (5-1). **3, Impish** (8-1). 6 ran. Nk, hd. (J Berry) Tote. £2.60: £1.10, £3.00. Dual F. £7.40 CSF: £11.24. NR. Miss Fugit Penance.

3.10 (1m 1f 36yds): 1, HIGH PREMIUM, A Culhane (2-1 fav). **2, Sun Mark** (33-1). **3, Calder King** (9-4) 12 ran ¾, ¾. (R Fahey) Tote: £3.40; £1.80, £4.20, £1.30 Dual F £57.40. Trio £54.30. CSF £75.45

3.40 (1m 65yds): 1, ROCK ISLAND LINE, P Roberts (5-1). **2, Tycoon Tina** (16-1); **3, Monilene** (12-1) 7-4 fav Murron Wallace. 7 ran. 6, 1¾. (J Berry) Tote. £4.90. £4.80, £4.00 Dual F: £51.80 CSF £69.32

4.10 (1m 3f 16yds): 1, MANFUL, N Kennedy (8-1); **2, Lord Advocate** (33-1); **3, Moonraking** (12-1) 9-4 fav Express Gift 14 ran. Nk, 5 (Miss L Perratt) Tote £8.10; £2.40 £3.30, £3.40 Dual F: £40.50. Trio: £355.40 CSF. £240.40 Tricast: £2,876.47. NR. Northern Motto.

4.40 (1m 4f 17yds): 1, GLOBE RUNNER, K Darley (20-1); **2, Here Comes Herbie** (4-7 fav); **3, Philmist** (16-1). 14 ran 1½, 2½. (J O'Neill) Tote: £30.60: £6.30, £1.10, £1.50 Dual F £20.30. Trio. £35.40 CSF. £30.08 Tricast: £238.45.

PLACEPOT: £130.50. **QUADPOT:** £29.30.

WORCESTER

2.00 (2m Hdle): 1, A S JIM, V Slattery (11-4); **2, Brave Spy** (16-1); **3, Strike-A-Pose** (6-1) 5-2 fav Ilewin Janine. 13 ran 7, 7. (O O'Neill) Tote: £3.10: £1.50, £3.40, £1.50. Dual F: £30.70. Trio. £30.50. CSF. £37.84 NR: Bayerd. Pedaltothemetal

2.30 (2m Hdle): 1, RIPARIUS, J Osborne (13-8 fav). **2, Mischief Star** (9-1). **3, Moon Devil** (10-1) 13 ran. 3, 4. (P Webber) Tote: £2.40; £1.40, £3.10 £2.40. Dual F £13.60 Trio: £95.90. CSF: £16.81. NR Blue Havana.

3.00 (2m 7f 110yds Ch): 1, DOMAINE DE PRON, R Bellamy (7-2). **2, High Learie** (13-8 fav) 8 ran. Dist. Only two finished. (Mrs L Taylor) Tote: £4.20, £1.70, £1.90. Dual F. £3.00. Trio: No 1 and No 2 with any other £2.00. CSF: £9.38. NR. Deep Song.

3.30 (3m Hdle): 1, ROYAL PIPER, L Harvey (14-1); **2, Barford Sovereign** (13-2); **3, Oatis Rose** (6-1). 9-2 fav Bankhead. 11 ran. ¾, 1¾. (A J Wilson) Tote: £13.60, £3.70, £2.10, £2.40. Dual F: £40.30 Trio: £155.80. CSF: £83.11 Tricast £658.64 NR Kingdom of Shades.

4.00 (2m 2f Hdle): 1, HANDY LASS, Mr O McPhail (10-1); **2, Peter Monamy** (11-2); **3, Kino's Cross** (16-1). 3-1 fav Above The Cut. 15 ran. 3, 10. (J Smith) Tote. £13.00; £2.50 £2.30, £5.30 Dual F: £37.30 Trio: £114.60 CSF. £55.31. Tricast £807.61.

4.30 (2m 4f 110yds Ch): 1, NO FIDDLING, D Bridgwater (10-1); **2, Winnow** (16-1); **3, Lobster Cottage** (14-1); **4, Dandie Imp** (8-1). 11-4 fav Boots N All. 17 ran. ¾, 1. (G McCourt) Tote. £12.60; £3.20, £3.80, £2.20 Dual F. £188.70. Trio: £1,028.80. CSF: £145.73. Tricast £2,082.63. NR. Oneofus

5.00 (2m): 1, RUPERT BLUES, M Richards (16-1); **2, Star Adventure** (12-1); **3, Certain Shot** (5-1). 4-1 fav Damien's Choice. 21 ran. ¾, nk. (J King) Tote: £24.20; £5.90, £5.30, £1.90 Dual F: £174.20. Trio: not won CSF £195.63. NR: Samuel Wilderspin

5.30 (2m): 1, MELODY MAID, M A Fitzgerald (2-1 fav): **2, Coble Lane** (16-1); **3, Brush With Fame** (16-1). 20 ran. 10, 2. (N Henderson) Tote: £3.00. £1.70, £2.20, £4.30. Dual F. £20.70 Trio. £53.30. CSF: £35.03. NR: Chabby Thoughts. Hack On.

JACKPOT: Not won. pool of £72,366.75 carried forward to Aintree today.

PLACEPOT: £505.80 **QUADPOT:** £103.10.

EXETER

2.20 (2m 2f Hdle): 1, SULAWESI, Mr J Goldstein (9-4). **2, Give And Take** (8-13 fav); **3, Timidjar** (13-2) 3 ran. 5, 12. (N Twiston-Davies) Tote. £2.60. Dual F. £1.70. CSF £3.74.

2.50 (2m 2f Hdle): 1, ON MY TOES, J Frost (14-1). **2, Quaker Waltz** (5-1); **3, Prove The Point** (6-1) 5-2 fav Rose of Glenn. 8 ran. ¾, 6. (R Frost) Tote: £13.30; £2.60, £1.40, £1.80 Dual F: £42.20. CSF: £78.17 Tricast £431.21.

3.20 (2m 3f 110yds Ch): 1, SORCHERIE, B Clifford (3-1); **2, Mozemo** (2-1); **3, Jonjas Chudleigh** (12-1). 6-4 fav First Class. 5 ran 3½, 6 (G Balding) Tote: £3.00; £1.70, £1.40 Dual F. £4.30 CSF: £8.80.

3.50 (2m 3f 110yds Hdle): 1, MR SNAGGLE, C Maude (2-1). **2, Kiwi Crystal** (7-1). **3, Shahrani** (3-1). 7-4 fav Super Tactics. 4 ran Nk, 2 (Simon Earle) Tote: £2.10. Dual F: £9.00. CSF £11.72.

4.20 (2m 2f Ch): 1, MONKS JAY, C Maude (12-1). **2, Polden Pride** (Evens fav); **3, Herbert Buchanan** (4-1). 4 ran. 5, 4. (G Thorner) Tote. £11.90. Dual F: £8.50. CSF: £23.17.

4.50 (2m 3f 110yds Hdle): 1, COUNTRY LOVER, Mr A Farrant (11-4); **2, Fontes Lad** (Evens fav), **3, Castlecorner** (25-1). 10 ran. 8, 2½. (M Pipe) Tote: £3.00; £1.80, £1.10, £3.70. Dual F: £2.80. Trio. £11.50. CSF: £5.15. NR. Alice Shorelark.

PLACEPOT: £1,137.50.

QUADPOT: £130.70.

● COCKERHAM trainer Jack Berry enjoyed a 20-1 double at Hamilton yesterday with I'm Still Here, the 5-2 favourite in the three-year-old handicap, and Rock Island Line (5-1) in the seller.

Soccer

Everton out to land both Robsons

Ian Ross and Martin Thorpe

EVERTON are likely to test Bryan Robson's apparent determination to stay in charge at Middlesbrough by inviting him to take up a senior managerial post at Goodison Park this summer.

The Merseyside club's chairman Peter Johnson is understood to be anxious to pair Robson with Bobby Robson, the Barcelona coach and the favourite to succeed Joe Royle, who resigned last week after a sequence of poor results that has left Everton five points above the relegation zone.

If Johnson can persuade the former England manager to return home at the end of the season, he would like to install Bryan Robson as his assistant.

Though Bryan Robson has led Middlesbrough to Sunday's Coca-Cola Cup final with Leicester City and an FA Cup semi-final against Chesterfield, he still has a family home in the North-west and may find irresistible the prospect of playing a part in Everton's revival.

Nathan Blake yesterday accepted Bobby Gould's apology over alleged racist remarks made by the Welsh manager. The FA of Wales, however, still intends to look into Gould's behaviour.

The players' union, the PFA, spent yesterday morning mediating between the pair after Gould had phoned Blake on Tueday night but found the player unwilling to accept his apology that the comments were not intended to be racist.

But after talking with the PFA's deputy chief executive Brendan Batson yesterday, Blake relented, though it is unclear whether he is sticking by his promise not to play for Gould again. The manager said that Blake's Welsh career would not be affected as far as he was concerned.

But the FAW president Brian Fear still wants to investigate Gould's remarks. "We will look into this. It wouldn't be right to sweep it under the carpet," he said.

Gould's comments, and his future as manager, will be discussed at the FAW committee meeting on April 16, although the chairman of its international committee Ken Tucker said yesterday: "Bobby Gould is still the man for the job."

Yesterday Gould said: "I've told the truth on this all the way through. If you tell the truth you've got no comeback. I stood up and apologised and you can do more than that. I'm two days older than I was but I'm a lot, lot wiser."

Fergus McCann has strongly defended his record as Celtic chairman in response to criticism over his failure to offer contracts to the manager Tommy Burns or the club captain Paul McStay. He has also been accused by Brian Dempsey, the wealthy businessman who helped McCann gain control in March 1994, of forgetting about Celtic's "soul".

In an article in Celtic View, the club newspaper, McCann, who rescued Celtic from bankruptcy three years ago, said: "If I wasn't a Celtic supporter I would be 3,000 miles away. I put two-thirds of my own money into Celtic three years ago. It was by no means a safe investment and there weren't people out there queuing up to put their own life savings on the line."

As to the claim that he is paying scant regard to the club's traditions, McCann retorted: "I've been accused of destroying the heart and soul of Celtic. If that's true, why did I set up the Celtic Charity Fund or start the Bhoys Against Bigotry initiative? The establishment of both means the principles on which the club was founded have been at the forefront of this new era."

He added: "I've heard it said that I'm not interested in spending on players or what happens on the park and that all I care about is keeping the share price high so that, in two years' time, I can sell my stake in the club for a fortune.

"This is ridiculous because, even if my only concern really was lining my pockets, success on the football front would be paramount as this is what drives the whole business forward. And to achieve it you must invest, which is what we have done and what we will continue to do."

Aston Villa are seeking planning permission to increase Villa Park's capacity to 50,000, with 10,250 more seats to be erected in the North Stand. The £11.25 million cost will be financed by the club's imminent flotation on the Stock Market.

Dowie and out . . . the West Ham striker (No. 9) tussles with Bezhenar at the Respublikansky Stadium in Kiev yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: EFREM LUKATSKY

World Cup Qualifying Group Nine: Ukraine 2, Northern Ireland 1

Hamilton's interest largely academic

Michael Walker

UNLIKELY achievements in the face of adversity have characterised Bryan Hamilton's spell in charge of Northern Ireland but yesterday in Kiev not even the Ulstermen's trademark stubbornness could defy Ukraine. Although Iain Dowie equalised Vitaly Kosovskyi's early strike, they had no answer to Andrei Shevchenko's goal 20 minutes from the end.

Qualification is still not impossible but it is more than likely the Irish will be watching the finals on television. Meanwhile Ukraine are in pole position — not many sides take six points off Northern Ireland.

Hamilton had made two changes from Saturday's 0-0 draw against Portugal. He brought in Hughes for Quinn as expected but, surprisingly, Horlock replaced Magilton and Nolan moved to right-back, allowing Horlock to play on the left.

But no formation could have been prepared for Gillespie's error in the second minute when he made a rash dash across the face of his own area and was dispossessed.

The Ukrainians had won a free-kick on the right and their influential captain Kalitvintsev took it. An Irish head cleared and Gillespie collected but, once he was tackled, Northern Ireland were back-pedalling nervously. Kosovskyi, a midfielder, picked up the loose ball, ran to the 18-yard line and fired with power and accuracy into Wright's top corner. The keeper, Irish captain for the day, had no chance.

A worse start was scarcely imaginable and, with the 20-year-old forward Shevchenko justifying his exciting reputation with swift and skilful running, the Irish back three of Hill, Taggart and Morrow were worried men.

However, as Lennon asserted himself, the Irish settled, aided by Gillespie's first run at the other end. Beating Skrypnyk with a jink down the right, Gillespie's deep cross was met on the volley at the far post by Hughes. As the ball flashed across goal it struck Luzhnyi's outstretched arm and there were few arguments when the referee awarded a penalty. Dowie's kick was hard and low.

Only 13 minutes had gone and the game was so open to half-time that Ukraine might have led 3-2 by then. Hill sent the Republic's best chance into the side-netting, as Shevchenko did too after a scramble in front of Wright's net. When Shevchenko fell dramatically in a challenge with Wright everybody stopped but the referee waved play on.

The second half began brightly for the visitors with Hughes and Gillespie lively and Dowie threatening with a couple of headers. But around the hour Ukraine, through Kardash and Kalitvintsev, took control. Always quick on the break, Kardash hit the woodwork, Rebrov and Mykhailenko went close and only two interceptions by Taggart prevented further danger.

It was, therefore, no great surprise when Kalitvintsev delivered another probing pass over Morrow and Shevchenko beat both Taggart and Wright to the ball and hooked it in. Quinn and McMahon came on up front but Northern Ireland never again suggested they could retrieve the match.

NORTHERN IRELAND: Wright (Manchester City), Hill (Leicester City), Taggart (Bolton Wanderers), Morrow (QPR), Gillespie (Newcastle; McMahon Stoke City, 82), Horlock (Manchester City), Lennon (Leicester; Quinn Blackpool, 75), Lomas (West Ham), Nolan (Sheffield Wednesday), Hughes (West Ham), Dowie (West Ham).

UKRAINE: Shovkovskyi, Luzhnyi, Golovko, Bezhenar, Skrypnyk, Kalitvintsev, (Kriventsov, 86), Mykhailenko, Kardash, Kosovskyi, (Orbu 73), Shevchenko, Rebrov.

Referee: V Krondl (Czech Republic).

Rum do as Jamaica friendly ends in a free-for-all down Mexico way

Stephen Bradfield

THE match was billed as a friendly but ended up a free-for-all as Jamaica and the Mexican side Toros Neza fought each other to a standstill in Toluca on April Fools' Day.

The trouble flared midway through the first half when Neza's German Arangio punched a Jamaican who had tackled him.

That lit the fuse and the players spent the next five minutes kicking and punching each other. Several Jamaicans then stormed off the field and returned waving bricks and broken glass.

The heat of battle in what was a warm-up game for Jamaica's World Cup qualifier against Mexico on April 13 was too much for the referee, who abandoned it.

Neza's players accused Jamaica of rough-house tactics. "That is not normal behaviour. It isn't possible that they react like this in a friendly," said the Neza striker Antonio Mohamed.

Jamaica's coach Rene Simoes defended his players, claiming they lacked international experience. But that seemed a lame excuse in view of last month's away friendly against Bolivia when two of them were sent off. There they had shown an eccentric lack of discipline, reacting to the altitude by laughing as opponents beat them and pretending to faint.

Group Eight: Macedonia 3, Republic of Ireland 2

McCarthy betrayed by two unhelpful hands

Charles Stuart

THE honeymoon is over for Mick McCarthy who watched in dismay as the Republic of Ireland's hopes of direct qualification disappeared in defeat at the hands of Macedonia.

Following a decade of unprecedented success, it was always going to be difficult for him to follow in the managerial footsteps of Jack Charlton, and that realisation became all too apparent in Skopje despite an early lead.

With Romania beating Lithuania 1-0 through a Dinu Moldovan goal in Vilnius, the best the Irish can hope for now is a place among the best runners-up, but even that will be a difficult task in view of yesterday's dismal result.

To complete the Irish misery Liverpool's Jason McAteer was shown a red card in injury time for a clumsy, high challenge on Milko Stojkovski, Macedonia's hero with two first-half penalties, who was also dismissed for retaliation.

Careless defending had allowed Roy Keane to create an opening for Tony Cascarino to set up Alan McLoughlin for an eighth-minute goal and the Portsmouth player headed home from six yards after a precise knock-down.

But it all started to go wrong when the Irish relaxed and penalties were given away by the wing-backs McAteer and Terry Phelan. Macedonia equalised on 27 minutes when McAteer, under no pressure, handled a centre by Vlatko Josev. Stojkovski shot gleefully home to end Alan Kelly's record of five international clean sheets. A further moment of madness when Phelan handled the ball inside the penalty area allowed the Macedonian marksman to score again.

The introduction of Norwich City's Keith O'Neill at half-time for the injured Cascarino proved a gamble that went wrong, with the player lasting only 22 minutes before being replaced by Sunderland's David Kelly.

O'Neill did threaten occasionally, however, especially when a Staunton cross caused havoc. But the Norwich striker was unable to force the ball over the line and Phelan then blazed over a would-be equaliser from close range.

The Leeds United youngster Ian Harte will also want to forget his journey to the Balkans. Within two minutes of replacing Phelan, he failed to cut out a Sakiri cross and Georgi Hristov scored from 19 yards in the 59th minute.

Throwing caution to the winds, McCarthy introduced David Kelly for the injured O'Neill after 76 minutes and the move paid an immediate dividend. The persistence of Jon Goodman enabled him to score his ninth international goal after only 60 seconds on the field.

McAteer's late dismissal means he will miss the next two group matches against Romania and Liechtenstein.

MACEDONIA: Celeski; Milosavov, Stojkovski, Markovski, Nikolovski, Sedloski, Josev, Glavevski (Micevski, 88min), Hristov (Beganovic, 78), Saliovski (Gorgioski, 83). Sakiri.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: A Kelly (Sheffield United); Irwin (Manchester United), Phelan (Everton; Harte, Leeds, 57min), McAteer (Liverpool), Breen (Coventry), Keane (Manchester United), Townsend (Aston Villa), McLoughlin (Portsmouth), Cascarino (Nancy; O'Neill, Norwich, h-t; D Kelly, Sunderland, 76), Goodman (Wimbledon), Staunton (Aston Villa).

Referee: A Trentalange (Italy).

Venables inquiry over Ashby role

THE Department of Trade and Industry look set to investigate the role of Eddie Ashby at Portsmouth following the resignation on Monday of the director Vic Jenner over the running of the club.

Ashby, the financial advisor of the club's owner and chairman Terry Venables, has no official title at Fratton Park but appears to be handling the daily running of financial affairs.

A DTI spokesperson confirmed that Ashby is banned from "acting in a managerial or directorial role" for seven years and added that "if anyone is acting in a managerial role with a disqualification order against them they would be contravening their disqualification.

"It does not matter if they are down on the books as the cleaner. If any individual contravenes such an order we would want to know about that."

The Football League has also written to Portsmouth for a clarification of the club's management structure after Jenner had said: "There are certain individuals in the club taking responsibilities which they should not be given. I was used to certain standards and they are not being met."

Results

Soccer

WORLD CUP EUROPEAN
Qualifying Group Eight

Macedonia (2) 3 **Rep of Ireland** (1) 2
Stojkovski 28, 44 (2 pens) McLoughlin 8
Hristov 58 D Kelly 78
8,000

Lithuania 0, Romania 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	5	5	0	0	19	0	15
Macedonia	6	3	1	2	18	10	10
Ireland	4	2	1	1	10	3	7
Lithuania	4	2	0	2	4	5	6
Iceland	4	0	2	2	1	7	2
Liechtenstein	5	0	0	5	2	23	0

Group Nine

Ukraine (1) 2 **N Ireland** (1) 1
Kozovsky 2 Dowie 14 (pen)
Shevchenko 70 70,000

Group One: Bosnia-Herzegovina 0, Greece 1. **Group Three:** Azerbaijan 1, Finland 2. **Group Five:** Bulgaria 4, Cyprus 1.

EUROPEAN U-21 CHAMPIONSHIP: Qualifying Group Five: Bulgaria 3, Cyprus 1.

PONTINS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Postponed: Leeds v Derby.

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Swansea 0, Ipswich 1; Wimbledon 2, Bournemouth 1.

PORTUGUESE CUP: Quarter-final: Benfica 5, Dragoes Sandinenses 1.

NEHRU GOLD CUP: Iraq 6, Uzbekistan 1.

FRIENDLY INTERNATIONAL: Australia 3, Hungary 1.

Tennis

WOMEN'S FAMILY CIRCLE CUP (Hilton Head Island, S Carolina): **First round:** J Capriati (US) bt M J Fernandez (US) 6-3, 4-6, 7-6; B Paulus (Aut) bt S Dopfer (Aut) 6-0, 6-2; G Leon Garcia (Sp) bt T Tanasugarn (Thai) 6-1, 6-4; M de Swardt (SA) bt N Zvereva (Bela) 6-4, 2-1 ret; L Raymond (US) bt L Wild (US) 6-0, 6-1; R Dragomir (Rom) bt K Studenikova (Slovak) 5-7, 7-6, 6-4; V Ruano-Pascual (Sp) bt P Hy-Boulais (Can) 6-2, 6-3; A Gersi (Cz) bt S Farina (It) 6-4, 6-0. **Second round:** M Seles (US) bt Shi-Ting Wang (Taiwan) 6-3, 6-3; C Martinez (Sp) bt O Barabanschikova (Bela) 6-7, 6-4, 6-3; I Spirlea (Rom) bt C Torrens-Valero (Sp) 7-6, 6-4.

Cricket

ICC TROPHY (Kuala Lumpur): **Second round: Group B:** Hong Kong 170 (47.5 overs). Netherlands 16-0 (5.2 overs). Abandoned, rain. Canada 99-4 (29.4 overs) Scotland. Abandoned, rain. **Group F:** Bangladesh 129 (49.1 overs). Ireland 24-0 (6.4 overs). Abandoned, rain. Bangladesh v Ireland. Abandoned, rain. Denmark 33-4 (9.4 overs) v Kenya. Abandoned, rain.

Chess

DOS HERMANOS GRANDMASTERS (Seville, Sp): **Round One:** B Gelfand (Belarus) 1, N Short (Eng) 0; M Illescas (Sp) v A Karpov (Rus); J Polgar (Hun) v V Salov (Rus); V Kramnik (Rus) v V Anand (Ind); A Shirov (Sp) v V Topalov (Bul) all drawn.

Ice Hockey

NHL: NY Rangers 1, Buffalo 1 (ot); Detroit 1, St Louis 1 (ot); Philadelphia 1, Tampa Bay 1 (ot); Washington 0, New Jersey 1; Phoenix 7, San Jose 1; Anaheim 3, Chicago 3 (ot).

Snooker

BRITISH OPEN (Plymouth): **Third round:** M Judge (Ire) bt D Dale (Wales) 5-3; S Hendry (Scot) bt P McPhillips (Scot) 5-4; D Harold (Eng) bt P Sweeny (Eng) 5-4; A McManus (Scot) bt W Thorne (Eng) 5-2.

Squash

BRITISH OPEN (Cardiff): **Second round:** Men: R Eyles (Aus) bt M Chaloner (Lincs) 15-13, 11-15, 15-8, 15-9. **Women:** S Wright (Kent) bt R Macree (Essex) 7-9, 3-9, 9-4, 9-6, 9-4; L Charman (Sussex) bt S Horner (Yorks) 9-3, 9-3, 9-10, 5-9, 9-1.

Fixtures

(7.30 unless stated)

Soccer

ICIS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Sutton Utd v Aylesbury. Second Division: Leatherhead v Banstead Ath.

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Arsenal v Bristol Rvrs (2.0).

S-E COUNTIES LEAGUE: Second Division: Swindon v Southampton (2.0).

Rugby League

YOUTH INTERNATIONAL: French Presidents XI v BARLA GB (8.30, Robinson Std, Paris).

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Leopards v Hemel & Watford (7.0).

● Andy Holligan will return to the scene of his first championship triumph to defend his British light-welterweight title against his fellow Merseysider Carl Wright. Holligan, 30 in June, will fight Wright at Liverpool's Everton Park Sports Centre on May 16, where he first won the British title nearly six years ago by outpointing Manchester's Tony Ekubia. He successfully defended his crown twice to win a Lonsdale Belt outright before losing the title to Ross Hale in Bristol three years later.

In the meantime Holligan also fought the legendary Julio Cesar Chavez, losing a WBC title challenge in five rounds in Mexico. The Chavez and Hale defeats were the only blemishes on Holligan's 28-fight record. Holligan regained the British title by knocking out Paul "Scrap Iron" Ryan in the first round in the York Hall, Bethnal Green, last July.

● The Mason's Cup fixture at Hickstead, scheduled for May 29, has been cancelled because of lack of sponsorship or any significant funding. The main events will be run at the Royal Windsor Horse show on May 11-15. Doubt remains as to Hickstead's other two major events: the Royal International in July and the British Jumping Derby the following month, but a full announcement is expected next week, writes *John Kerr*.

● Alan Shearer yesterday dipped a toe into the club-versus-country row by urging his England team-mates to play in all the scheduled games. "It is important for future team building that we assemble a strong squad for the summer tour to France and I am sure that everyone with an eye on a World Cup place is hoping to be selected," said the captain. "Ask anyone who has ever won an international cap and they will tell you that playing for England is the most important thing an English footballer can do." The England coach Glenn Hoddle has planned for five games in 18 days at the end of the season, including a World Cup qualifier in Poland and a four-nation tournament against three of next year's contenders for the finals.

● Leicester City have sold all of the 32,000 tickets they have been allocated for the Coca-Cola Cup final against Middlesbrough at Wembley on Sunday.

● The Bolton captain Gudni Bergsson has been ruled out of Saturday's home game with Queens Park Rangers, when his side could clinch promotion, because of a leg injury.

Sailing

Cocktail of horror on the high sea

Simon Montague on Nuclear Electric reports on the fourth leg of the BT Global Chalenge

WE were warned that this fourth leg would be the toughest few weeks of our lives. We read the horror stories from previous journeys through the Southern Ocean from Australia to Cape Town. Each of us suspected our stamina and spirit would be tested to the utmost. But nothing could have prepared us for this.

For the last three weeks the fleet has been lashed by gales and storms. Hardly a yacht has escaped damage, with ripped sails, broken booms, damaged radars and failed radios. Safety equipment has been swept off the decks and at least two boats have been knocked flat by giant waves.

To be caught in a full Southern Ocean storm is an experience impossible to forget. The wind roars across the deck at more than 50 knots, the waves are vast hillsides covered with long white streaks of spray. From their crests the entire seascape is enveloped in a mist of flying salt.

The sheer power of the ocean is humbling. At the helm I feel my senses dulled by the effort of keeping the yacht on course. I am vaguely aware of a cocktail of exhilaration, grim determination and fear. I am steering into a Force 10 and we are 2,000 miles from land.

We take half-hour turns at the wheel before returning below, fingers and toes throbbing with cold. Whatever the privations of being on watch, lying in one's bunk in storm conditions is worse. Sleep is almost impossible, not because of the violent jolting of the pipecot but because of the unending noise. The rigging howls, the mast creaks and, worst of all, there are appalling crashes as Nuclear Electric falls off another wave. Earplugs cannot keep out the din.

Our sails have torn no fewer than five times. A blown spinnaker has been followed by the staysail splitting twice, the mainsail ripped in half and now the No. 3 yankee foresail is beyond repair.

The No. 3 is vital in Force seven or eight, which blows much of the time. Whenever the wind builds we are conscious of the need to preserve the larger No. 2 yankee, equally aware that, if we change too early to the pocket-sized storm jib, we will suffer a serious loss of speed.

Our misadventures have left us languishing near the back of the fleet. Only Heath Insured II, knocked flat and mainsail ripped, and Pause To Remember, their boom folded in the middle, are well behind us. For the last two weeks our tactic has been to stay north of the rest of the fleet, hoping to outflank some of our rivals as we close on the Kerguelen Islands.

Fortunately we have not been too far north to miss some of the great souvenir sights of these deep latitudes. Our one Antarctic iceberg hove into view as a ghostly white rock on the horizon, so clear from 12 miles it must have been huge close up.

More spectacular were the Southern Lights, an enormous arc of atmospheric gases glowing green across a starry sky, with a curtain of more green rays pointing upwards behind us.

This week a huge whale accompanied us for a while, blowing and surfacing no more than three boat lengths away. It is perhaps 50 feet long and, from its behaviour and distinctive fin, we are pretty sure it is a rare sei whale, a kind heavily depleted by whalers and seen only close to oceanic islands.

We should pass the Kerguelens today or tomorrow and we will not be stopping. When Captain James Cook explored these waters more than 200 years ago, he named them the Isles of Desolation, finding nothing to make them worth contesting with the French, who today have scientific and satellite tracking bases here.

Instead it will be a relief to know we are at last heading for warmer climes and kinder seas, even if Cape Town is still 2,400 miles and a fortnight away. The endless cycle of crawling out of damp sleeping bags every four hours, pulling on even damper clothes, facing the sometimes considerable dangers of work on deck and eating on one's feet is nearly over.

This second Southern Ocean leg has been a test of physical and mental endurance beyond anything we would want to face again. As one of the crew on a rival yacht said: "Anyone who says they enjoy the Southern Ocean is either lying, nuts or has never really been there."

$4m race rescued, page 14

Everton tempt both Robsons, page 15

Double World Cup blow for Irish, page 15

Man can still be number one, page 14

SportsGuardian

TIGER JOHNSON GIVEN LEADING ROLE

	Club	Country	Age	Caps
Full-backs				
Neil Jenkins	Pontypridd	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tim Stimpson	Newcastle	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Right-wings				
John Bentley	Newcastle	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Ieuan Evans	Llanelli	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Left-wings				
Nick Beal	Northampton	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tony Underwood	Newcastle	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Centres				
Allan Bateman	Richmond	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Scott Gibbs	Swansea	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Jeremy Guscott	Bath	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Will Greenwood	Leicester	England A	[illegible]	[illegible]
Utility back				
Alan Tait	Newcastle	Scotland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Fly-halves				
Paul Grayson	Northampton	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Gregor Townsend	Northampton	Scotland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Scrum-halves				
Matt Dawson	Northampton	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Austin Healey	Leicester	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Robert Howley	Cardiff	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Loose-head props				
Graham Rowntree	Leicester	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tom Smith	Watsonians	Scotland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tight-head props				
Peter Clohessy	Queensland	Ireland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Jason Leonard	Harlequins	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
David Young	Cardiff	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Hookers				
Mark Regan	Bristol	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Barry Williams	Neath	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Keith Wood	Harlequins	Ireland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Locks				
Jeremy Davidson	London Irish	Ireland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Martin Johnson (capt)	Leicester	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Simon Shaw	Bristol	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Doddie Weir	Newcastle	Scotland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Blind-side flankers				
Lawrence Dallaglio	Wasps	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Rob Wainwright	Watsonians	Scotland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Open-side flankers				
Neil Back	Leicester	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
Richard Hill	Saracens	England	[illegible]	[illegible]
No 8s				
Eric Miller	Leicester	Ireland	[illegible]	[illegible]
Scott Quinnell	Richmond	Wales	[illegible]	[illegible]
Tim Rodber	Northampton	England	[illegible]	[illegible]

Lions go for power

Robert Armstrong on Fran Cotton's choices for the ultimate physical test in South Africa

FRAN COTTON lived up to his promise to pick a Lions squad "capable of making a physical statement" by naming six former rugby league professionals in the party of 35 to tour South Africa.

The Lions captain will be Martin Johnson, the Leicester and England lock who made his reputation on the 1993 tour to New Zealand. Leicester's Neil Back, Northampton's Matt Dawson, Newcastle's Tony Underwood and the Watsonians prop Tom Smith are the surprise selections in a squad largely put together from a list of 62 players announced in February. Ireland's Peter Clohessy, who is currently playing for Queensland in the Super-12 series, is a controversial selection due to his appalling disciplinary record which earned him a six-month suspension for stamping on France's Olivier Roumat in Paris last year.

There is no place for Mike Catt or Jonathan Davies, the respective Bath and Cardiff fly-halves who faced each other in last month's England victory over Wales.

Unusually two players, Neil Jenkins (broken arm) and Keith Wood (shoulder damage), will have to prove to the Lions' management that their injuries have mended properly before they can get on the plane to Durban on May 17.

If Jenkins, who is a world-class goal-kicker, were to struggle for any reason the Lions would be in deep trouble since Grayson is the only other sharpshooter in the squad. Leaving out the all-purpose Catt, a competent goal-kicker, obviously involved a calculated risk.

In fact, only one Bath player, Jeremy Guscott, has found favour with the Lions selectors, who have overlooked the varying claims of Adedayo Adebayo, Jon Sleightholme, Phil de Glanville, the England captain, and Richard Webster, another player back from league. Simon Geoghegan misses out because he has not recovered from injury rapidly enough.

Cotton said of Johnson's selection: "Martin has a good dressing-room manner. He is totally respected by the players and he'll also get respect from the opposition. He is a man of stature in every sense — when the Springboks see someone who is 6ft 8in and 17½ stone coming at them, they know who the Lions captain is."

The six former league players — David Young, Scott Gibbs, Allan Bateman, Scott Quinnell, John Bentley and Alan Tait — are expected to make a crucial contribution to the success of the tour, with possibly four of them winning a Test place. Bentley, who toured Australia with England in 1988, is the only one of them not to play international rugby this season.

Will Greenwood, the Leicester and England A centre, is the only uncapped player in the squad. His incisive attacking play for club and country and his shrewd leadership of the A side makes his claims hard to resist.

Nevertheless, his inclusion at the expense of de Glanville, who finished the championship on a high note, will be a bitter blow to the England leader. Indeed, Underwood is the only current England three-quarter to make the cut after being left off the preliminary list.

Six of the Lions are drawn from Leicester while five each come from Newcastle, the League Two promotion chasers, and Northampton, who are languishing in the League One doldrums. The Saints' scrum-half Dawson wins his place at the expense of Saracens' Kyran Bracken because of five England caps last season in tandem with Paul Grayson, who will vie with another Saint, Gregor Townsend, for the No. 10 shirt in the Test side. The old firm of Dawson and Grayson could be reunited as dirt-trackers.

World Cup qualifying, Group Four
Scotland 2, Austria 0

Gallacher makes it a double

Patrick Glenn at Celtic Park

A STUTE and competent rather than swashbuckling, Scotland's performance restored their World Cup impetus by taking them seven points clear of last night's victims as Kevin Gallacher, the Blackburn forward scored the two goals that brought the dream nearer reality.

The pre-match words of Austria's manager Herbert Prohaska — "We'll try for a win, but we'll be very satisfied with a draw" — hinted strongly that victory was not the visitors' primary objective. For large wedges of a studied, tactical match, this impression was fully vindicated.

Craig Brown's decision to leave McStay on the bench and play Lambert as Herzog's marker was a declaration of his healthy respect for the Werder Bremen midfielder as main supply route to Polster, their lone striker.

It was a sacrificial gambit in foregoing McStay's creative force in the cause of keeping ambitious opponents in check, but by the time the Scots had taken the lead, in the 25th minute, it had become obvious that this deployment was an impressive managerial stroke.

Gallacher and Jackson, the Scotland strike force, had already bothered Konsel before combining to produce the opening goal. On the first occasion they played a one-two through the middle of the Austrian defence, Gallacher receiving the return pass and sprinting between Feiersinger and Schöttel. The ball was slightly over-run, however, and Konsel fell and held it at the feet of the Blackburn forward.

The pair made their next quick and dangerous manoeuvre count. Gallacher released the darting Jackson into the area on the left and Konsel made the block as the Hiberian striker tried to left-foot it past him from an angle.

The ball came off the goalkeeper and Jackson regained possession near the dead-ball line. He was clearly tripped as he pushed it across the goal but while the crowd screamed for a penalty Gallacher dashed forward and slammed the ball into the empty net with his left foot from three yards.

But for the Russian referee's refusal to apply the letter of the law two Austrians would surely have been sent off. Schöttel, already cautioned for a bad foul on McKinlay, was let off after a further offence when the referee, pulling out the yellow card again, realised it was the same player. Prohaska took Schöttel off at half-time, replacing him with Kogler.

Then early in the second half, the Scots broke from defence and Collins played Jackson down the left. He knocked the ball past Feiersinger, who clearly and deliberately charged him to the ground. Mr Levnikov, perhaps aware that a free-kick would mean a red card, surprisingly waved play on.

The Scots should have been two ahead by then, but Collins's right foot let him down with a weak shot after he and Jackson had exchanged passes to put him clear.

Hendry had the next chance, the ball falling at his feet after Calderwood had headed McAllister's free-kick from the right back across the box. But the big defender's close-range shot was closed down by Kogler.

As if to underline the injudiciousness of his previous disciplinary decisions, the referee then booked Collins for a challenge on Kogler.

A second goal, however, arrived in the 78th minute, again from Gallacher. Lambert's pass into the area came to him via a deflection and from the right-hand corner of the penalty area he volleyed the ball high past Konsel; a peach of a goal.

SCOTLAND: Leighton (Hiberian); Burley (Chelsea), Calderwood (Tottenham), Hendry (Blackburn), Boyd (Celtic), T McKinlay (Celtic); G McAllister (Coventry), Lambert (Borussia Dortmund), Collins (Monaco); Gallacher (Blackburn), Jackson (Hibernian).

AUSTRIA: Konsel; Feiersinger, Schöttel (Kogler, h-t), Pfeffer; Schopp, Herzog, Weil, Stöger, Aigner; Herzog, Polster.

Referee: N Levnikov (Russia).

Poles hold Italy but fail to help England

POLAND did not do quite enough to help England's hopes of automatic qualification for the World Cup finals when they held the Group Two leaders Italy to a goalless draw in Chorzow last night.

They were the first points dropped by Italy in five games but, even if Glenn Hoddle's team win their match in hand, they will still be a point behind.

Turkey caused a surprise by defeating the Group Seven leaders Holland 1-0 in Bursa. The Dutch's 100 per cent record was ended by Hakan Sukur's 52nd minute header.

In Group Nine Germany beat Albania 3-2 but it was no Spanish stroll in Granada, where the match was switched because of the situation in Albania. A hat-trick by the substitute Ulf Kirsten got the European champions out of trouble after Albania, who missed an early penalty, had drawn first blood when Bledar Kola scored from the spot in the 61st minute. He converted another penalty on the whistle.

A last-minute goal by Aston Villa's Savo Milosevic earned Yugoslavia a 2-1 victory against the Czech Republic in Prague.

A macabre act

'Martyn Bedford has scored a remarkable triumph with one of the nastiest first novels you could hope to read'
DAILY EXPRESS

An All Black aces Boks

Robert Armstrong

LEICESTER stepped up their drive to win the Courage Championship with an anxiety-ridden victory over Wasps that owed a heavy debt to the accurate goal-kicking of Joel Stransky at Welford Road last night.

South Africa's World Cup winner punished Wasps' persistent indiscipline with six penalties that brought Leicester within four points of the league leaders with two games in hand. Gareth Rees kicked four penalties for Wasps before a crowd of 17,000, the largest for a league or cup match this season.

The fact that six Tigers had been chosen for the Lions' tour to South Africa certainly gave Wasps the incentive to strut their stuff though the league's leaders found precious few opportunities to move the ball sweetly through hands in the opening half-hour.

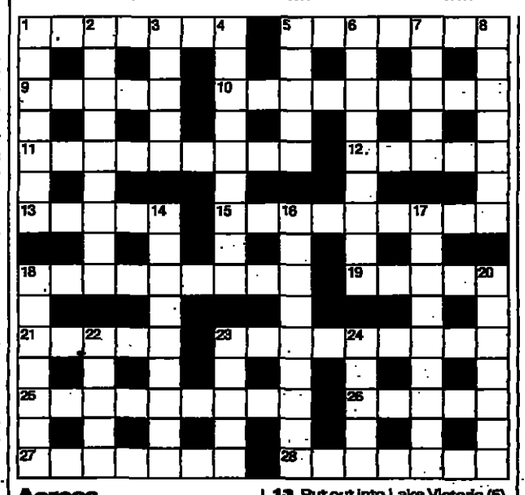
It took *eight minutes for* Leicester's goal-kicking maestro Stransky to stroke home a 30-metre penalty from close to the left touchline after a Wasps forward rashly dived over the top. Even at that early stage Leicester's tight forwards, Rowntree, Cockerill and Johnson, showed keen desire to run ball in hand straight into the heart of the Wasps' defence with the aim of setting up a working platform for the backs on the edge of the 22.

Nevertheless, the London side remained cool and organised throughout at the set-pieces, keeping a weather-eye open for quick sorties down the blind-side or calculated at*tempts to drive through the* line-out.

SCORERS: Leicester: Penalties: Stransky 8. **Wasps: Penalties:** Rees 4.
Leicester: N Malone; S Hackney, W Greenwood, C Joiner, L Lloyd (R Underwood, 71min); J Stransky, A Healey; G Rowntree, R Cockerill, D Garforth, M Johnson (capt), M Poole, E Miller, N Back, D Richards.
Wasps: G Rees; S Roiser, N Greenstock, R Henderson, K Logan; A King, A Gomarsall; D Molloy, S Mitchell, W Green, M Greenwood, A Reed, L Dallaglio (capt), M White, C Sheasby.
Referee: B Campsall (Yorkshire).

Guardian Crossword No 20,928

Set by Crispa

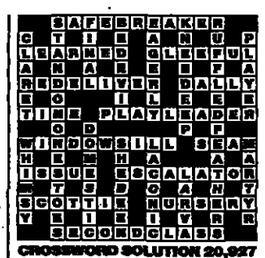


Across

1 Tease at one point causing fights (7)
5 Found cold tea revolting (7)
9 Leave with a warm jacket (5)
10 Picking up scattered night-gear (9)
11 The money that is about may be used for lingerie (9)
12 Dish a fool returned with thanks (5)
13 Put out into Lake Victoria (5)
15 The person wanting endless fruit one cannot supply (9)
18 Dispatch spring flowering plant (9)
19 Though out of key, the Spanish are superior (5)
21 Dined soundly at a reasonable hour (5)
23 Stop canoeists getting way out (9)
25 Top people after a heavenly body? Right! (9)
26 Gaining nothing by a musical performance (5)
27 An unusual perfume now being produced (7)
28 Not involved in the action, but represented (7)

Down

1 Thick rope with a soft content is quite adequate (7)
2 Spread at sea to entrap fish (9)
3 Assemble for a church service (5)
4 Easter-egg production should be separate (9)
5 Turner put many articles together (5)
6 Second-rate party in London (9)
7 Call for formal dress (5)
8 A horse-drawn vehicle — not a growler though (7)
14 This records the main rises *and falls (4,5)*
16 With a fence paid, deals can be arranged (9)
17 The man offering constructive suggestions (9)
18 Moves on one of the family (7)
20 The crazy lady ran to find a length of cord (7)
22 Gets proceeds after a smashing start! (5)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,927

23 Ship-building technique (5)
24 A cereal or fruit? (5)

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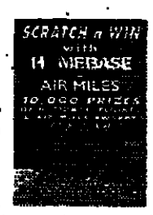

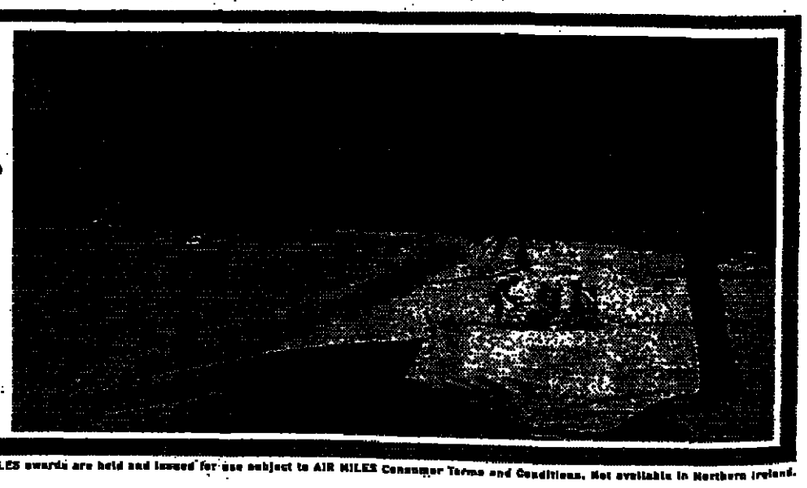

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